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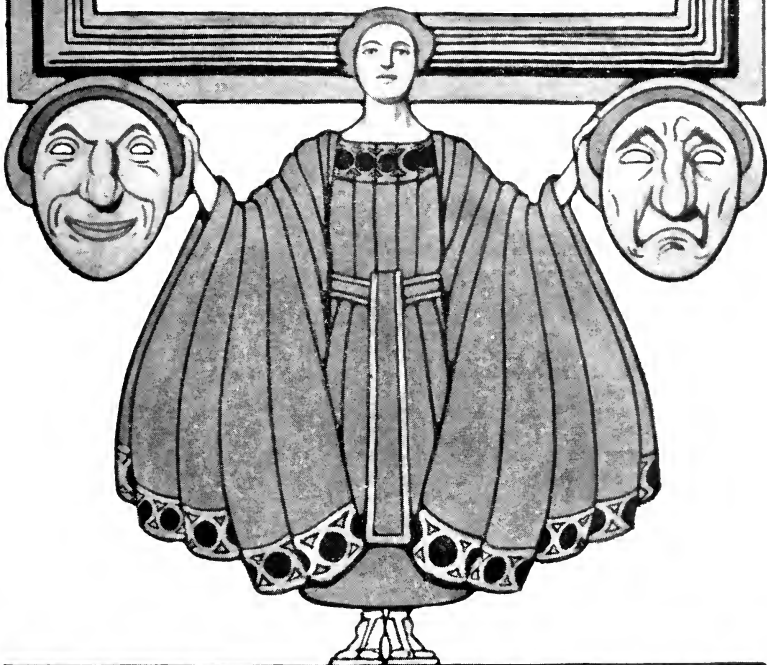
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1918

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Innocent Desperado

Vance C. Criss



THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

Successful Rural Plays

A Strong List From Which to Select Your Next Play

FARM FOLKS. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. For five male and six female characters. Time of playing, two hours and a half. One simple exterior, two easy interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Flora Goodwin, a farmer's daughter, is engaged to Philip Burleigh, a young New Yorker. Philip's mother wants him to marry a society woman, and by falsehoods makes Flora believe Philip does not love her. Dave Weston, who wants Flora himself, helps the deception by intercepting a letter from Philip to Flora. She agrees to marry Dave, but on the eve of their marriage Dave confesses, Philip learns the truth, and he and Flora are reunited. It is a simple plot, but full of speeches and situations that sway an audience alternately to tears and to laughter. Price, 25 cents.

HOME TIES. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. Characters, four male, five female. Plays two hours and a half. Scene, a simple interior—same for all four acts. Costumes, modern. One of the strongest plays Mr. Tubbs has written. Martin Winn's wife left him when his daughter Ruth was a baby. Harold Vincent, the nephew and adopted son of the man who has wronged Martin, makes love to Ruth Winn. She is also loved by Len Everett, a prosperous young farmer. When Martin discovers who Harold is, he orders him to leave Ruth. Harold, who does not love sincerely, yields. Ruth discovers she loves Len, but thinks she has lost him also. Then he comes back, and Ruth finds her happiness. Price 25 cents.

THE OLD NEW HAMPSHIRE HOME. A New England Drama in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For seven males and four females. Time, two hours and a half. Costumes, modern. A play with a strong heart interest and pathos, yet rich in humor. Easy to act and very effective. A rural drama of the "Old Homestead" and "Way Down East" type. Two exterior scenes, one interior, all easy to set. Full of strong situations and delightfully humorous passages. The kind of a play everybody understands and likes. Price, 25 cents.

THE OLD DAIRY HOMESTEAD. A Rural Comedy in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For five males and four females. Time, two hours. Rural costumes. Scenes rural exterior and interior. An adventurer obtains a large sum of money from a farm house through the intimidation of the farmer's niece, whose husband he claims to be. Her escapes from the wiles of the villain and his female accomplice are both starting and novel. Price, 15 cents.

A WHITE MOUNTAIN BOY. A Strong Melodrama in Five Acts, by CHARLES TOWNSEND. For seven males and four females, and three supers. Time, two hours and twenty minutes. One exterior, three interiors. Costumes easy. The hero, a country lad, twice saves the life of a banker's daughter, which results in their betrothal. A scoundrelly clerk has the banker in his power, but the White Mountain boy finds a way to checkmate his schemes, saves the banker, and wins the girl. Price 15 cents.

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

An Innocent Desperado

A Comedy in Three Acts

By
VANCE C. CRISS



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CHARACTERS

HAL WINSTON	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>an artist</i>
HENRY SIMPKINS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>who heeds his wife</i>
"LYING JIM" DOBBS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>a real prevaricator</i>
BUB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>a country bumpkin</i>
PERCIVAL FUDGETOP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>a near hero</i>
THE SHERIFF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>an officer in doubt</i>
JERUSHA SIMPKINS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Henry's wife and boss</i>
MRS. GLOVER	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Helen's mother, who would be Percival's mother-in-law</i>
TILDA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>a country maid, who longs for love</i>
HELEN GLOVER	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>who seeks romance—and finds it</i>

TIME OF PLAYING.—Two hours.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Helen Glover is a young lady who "just loves adventure," and hopes she will run across a "moonshiner" and a real mountain feud. Jim Dobbs persuades Percival Fudgetop and Helen that Hal Winston, an artist, is a desperate criminal. Percival, to impress Helen, captures the "criminal." Then romantic Helen wishes to assist Winston to escape the sheriff, but he declines. The sheriff says he has no reason to capture Winston. But Hal has already captured Helen's heart, and Helen's love of romance is satisfied.

COSTUMES

WINSTON. About twenty-eight. May wear khaki suit with puttees, or white trousers and blue coat.

SIMPKINS. About fifty. A "hickory" or flannel shirt, and with overalls tucked into boot tops.

DOBBS. About fifty. Broad-brimmed slouch hat, flannel shirt open at the throat, frayed trousers and old shoes or boots.

BUB. About eighteen. Checkered jumper and large size overalls.

FIDGETOP. About twenty-five. Act I, fashionable summer suit with hat to match. Acts II and III, cap, light silk shirt and light trousers.

SHERIFF. About forty-five. Slouch hat, Prince Albert coat, trousers tucked in his boot tops, and with revolver in holster at his belt.

JERUSHA. About fifty. House dress, neat but plain, and gingham apron.

TILDY. About seventeen. Gingham apron dress.

MRS. GLOVER. About forty-five. Act I, traveling dress. Act II, lounging dress. Act III, morning dress.

HELEN. About nineteen. Act I, traveling dress. Act II, light summer dress. Act III, similar to dress in Act II.

PROPERTIES

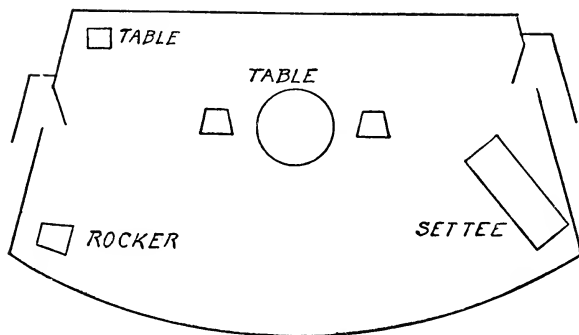
ACT I. Telephone and bell. Several grips, umbrella and other things carried by travelers. Monocle (eye-glass).

ACT II. A barrel and two boxes. Box of dominoes. Small book. Bucket of water and glass. Revolver and shotgun.

ACT III. Blankets. Chair. Water bucket and dipper. Pipe, tobacco, matches. Auto horn, to be heard off stage. Portfolio, containing letters and large sheets supposed to be an artist's sketches.

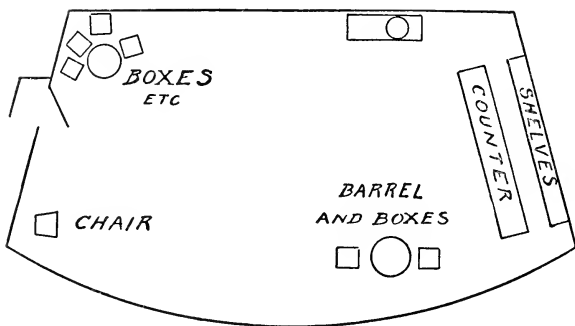
SCENE PLOTS

ACT I



· SCENE.—Parlor of the Simpkins boarding house. It is a very plainly furnished country room, with doors R. and L. A settee down L., and a rocker down R.; another chair down L. Table with a chair each side of it, up c. Another small table, up R., holds a telephone. Other furnishings to suit, such as old-fashioned pictures, mottoes and calendars on walls, book-case, etc.

ACTS II AND III



SCENE.—Henry Simpkins' store. Counter, with shelves, show-cases, etc., L. All the arrangements very crude and simple. Door R. Windows at back if desired, but these are not necessary. Up L. bench with bucket of water and dipper. Down L. c. a barrel with closed head, used as a table. A box on either side of it, used as seat. Chair down R. Barrels, boxes, goods, etc., at R. and up C.

An Innocent Desperado

ACT I

SCENE.—*Parlor in the SIMPKINS house. Settee down L.; rocking-chair down R.; table with chairs on either side of it, up C. Another small table with telephone, up R. Pictures, old-fashioned wall mottoes and flowers may be used to give color to the room.*

(*Curtain rising discloses TILDY seated in a rocker down R., rocking and humming. Door R. opens and BUB enters. He slips behind TILDY and covers her eyes with his hands.*)

BUB. Guess who.

TILDY (*still rocking*). Laws-a-me, Mr. Winston, I knowed who y'u was th' minute them soft hands o' yourn come across my cheeks.

BUB (*removing his hands and stepping to her side, R.*). I ain't that Winston feller, an' my hands ain't soft. Y'u knowed I wasn't that artist feller, an' y're jus' tryin' to make fun o' me. That's th' way with a woman. (*Goes L.*) It don't make no difference how nice y'u are to 'em, they're always bein' cruel to y'u. Y'u know that feller don't care nothin' fer y'u. It ain't right fer y'u to be a-carin' fer him, an' him not a-carin' fer y'u, when I'm a-carin' fer y'u like I am.

TILDY (*haughtily*). Why don't y'u quit a-pesterin' me with yer silly talk. Go talk to Winnie Jimpson. I ain't never said I cared fer Mr. Winston, have I?

BUB. No, y'u ain't never said it, but —

TILDY. Mebbe I don't want him. You don't know. But y'u can be plumb shore o' one thing—I don't care

th' snap o' my 'finger fer you. Winnie Jimpson can have you.

BUB (*crossing L. and dropping on his knees to her*). You know I don't want her. Tildy, I jus' can't stand you a-trampin' on my heart like y're a-doin'. If y'u don't quit foolin'——

(*Telephone bell gives three short rings.*)

TILDY. There. Them three rings is fer old man Jimpson's place. I bet Bill Wilson is a-callin' your stuck-up Winnie Jimpson.

BUB (*rising*). She ain't mine, an' you know it. I'm a-goin' to see if it is Bill. I'd like to hear what a feller says when he's in love, 'cause I'm plumb anxious to say somethin' to y'u that'll make y'u care fer me.

TILDY. Well, don't be a-standin' there then. If y're a-wantin' to listen, y'u can't hear where y're a-standin' now.

(BUB *goes to telephone, takes receiver from hook and stands listening, looking at TILDY.*)

BUB. Haw, haw, haw! He called her his little sugar bowl, an' she purty near got mad 'cause she didn't understand. Then he told her he jus' called her that 'cause she was s' sweet. Golly, I wisht I c'd talk like that.

TILDY. They ain't no use in y'u a-wishin'. Y'u couldn't call nobody nothin' they'd like. You never said a nice thing to me yet.

BUB. Now he's a-tellin' her —— (*Turns excitedly to telephone.*) What's that? I ain't neither listenin' in. I come here to talk, but it ain't no use fer anybody else to try to use this here tellyfone, as long's y're too lazy to go over to old man Jimpson's place to do yer courtin'. (*Hangs up receiver.*)

TILDY. That's what y'u git fer pokin' yer nose int' other folkses' business. I told y'u y'u couldn't be no gentleman. Mr. Winston wouldn't do nothin' like that, an' I wouldn't neither, 'cause I'm a-goin t' be a lady.

(BUB, *crestfallen, exit, R.* TILDY *watches until he is gone, slips over to door L. to see if any one is coming, then goes to 'phone and places receiver at her ear. She has stood there a few seconds, with suppressed giggling, when BUB enters R., behind her.*)

BUB. Boo.

TILDY. Oh! (*Hangs up receiver, and, embarrassed, turns. Sees BUB and is angry at once.*) That's a purty way to do when I'm a-tryin' to telly-fone to somebody. I knowed y'u warn't no gentleman.

BUB. Haw, haw, haw! Y'u can't fool me. Y're a lady, all right, ain't y'u? Y'u was listenin' to what Bill was a-sayin' to Winnie.

TILDY (*going c.*). I wasn't, neither. I was a-tryin' to talk to —

BUB. No, y'u wasn't. I seen y'u sneak to th' telly-fone. I seen y'u. I'm a-goin' to tell —

(*Enter JERUSHA SIMPKINS, L. Advances c. to TILDY and BUB. JERUSHA L., TILDY C. and BUB R.*)

JERUSHA. Looky here, you two. I'm a-goin' to say somethin' an' I want y'u to listen. Them city boarders is a-comin' to-day, an' I'm a-goin' to tell y'u what to do fer 'em. Bub, I want y'u to meet 'em out there at th' gate an' fetch in their grips. Remember y'u ain't to ask a lot o' fool questions, an' y'u ain't to set yerself up to be a-doin' all th' talkin'. Jus' do whatever they tell y'u an' keep yer mouth shut. That there last's th' most important thing o' all. An', Tildy, I'm a-goin' to spare y'u out o' th' kitchen a little now an' then to help with th' dressin'. An' y'u want to keep yer mouth shut, jus' like I was a-tellin' Bub. Do what they tell y'u, an' don't ask no fool questions. Them wimmen ain't used to bein' talked to by servants, an' I ain't a-goin' to have th' repitation o' my place spiled. Now remember, both o' y'u, do whatever is told y'u, an' keep yer mouths shut. (*Comes down L.*)

BUB. How many is a-comin'? (*Comes down R.*)

JERUSHA. They's three; Mis' Glover, an' her daughter an' a friend.

BUB. Is this here friend a male er a female friend?

JERUSHA. I don't know, an' it ain't none o' yer business noways.

BUB. I don't care which it is, s' long's he leaves Tildy alone.

TILDY (*coming down c.*). I'd like to know who asked y'u to be a-lookin' after me. It ain't none o' yer business if they's one man er if they's two dozen.

JERUSHA. What's th' matter with you two, a-fussin' like this? What's ailin' y'u both?

BUB. I ain't a-goin' to have Tildy —

JERUSHA. What right have y'u got, a-pesterin' Tildy like this?

BUB. I ain't a-goin' to have any more fellers a-runnin' after Tildy. That there artist feller's 'nough.

TILDY. You shut up, Bub.

JERUSHA. What d' y'u mean 'bout that artist feller an' Tildy? Speak right up now, an' tell th' truth.

TILDY. Shut up, I tell y'u.

BUB. That there artist feller's a-runnin' after Tildy, an' I ain't a-goin' to have it. I seen him kiss her in th' pasture t'other day.

TILDY. Y'u ain't never saw him kiss me in th' pasture, ner no place else.

JERUSHA. I reckon if he's kissed y'u at all he's kissed y'u on th' mouth. That's where most kissin's done. But I want to know, Tildy Hostetter, if what this here boy says is true. Answer me right up, without a bit o' foolin'.

TILDY. I don't see as it's —

JERUSHA. Don't give me none o' yer lip. Yer mother put y'u in my charge, to bring y'u up a respectable gal, an' a member in th' church, an' I'm a-goin' to do it. I ain't a-goin' to bury my talent. I'm a-goin' to be faithful to my trust.

TILDY. I don't care. I don't see as it's anybody's business if he did kiss me.

JERUSHA. No, I reckon y'u don't care; I reckon it don't make no difference if y'u turn out to be respect-

able like, or a child o' th' devil. If y'u ain't got sense 'nough to leave them artist fellers alone, somebody's got to do it fer y'u.

BUB. I bet he ain't no artist, noway. He's jus' one o' them city doods out here a-havin' a good time an' a-makin' fun o' me. He don't look like no artist to me.

JERUSHA. I reckon you know a lot 'bout how them artist fellers look!

TILDY. He is too a artist, an' he thinks I'm pretty. He's a-paintin' my picter.

JERUSHA. Paintin' yer picter! That's worse still. If y'u wasn't s' ignorant, y'd have more sense. Don't y'u know them artists paints winnmen without much clothes on, an' carries on scandalous like? First thing y'u know, y'll be goin' 'round here with a lace curtain on, a-thinkin' y're one o' them heathen queens an' a-bringin' disgrace on th' whole pack an' passel o' us.

TILDY. I don't care what folks says. Mr. Winston ain't been anything but a gentleman with me.

JERUSHA. Well, all I got to say is that I ain't got time fer no more foolin' now. Y'u two git int' th' kitchen an' git cleaned up. Them city folks'll be a-comin' most any minute now, an' I ain't a-goin' to have you two a-lookin' like y'd never even saw a wash pan. Now git, both o' y'u. (BUB and TILDY, *the latter disdainful, exeunt, L., as HENRY SIMPKINS enters R.*) Looky here, Henry Simpkins, what d' y'u mean, a-draggin' in this way when y'u know them city boarders is a-comin' to-day? Ain't I told y'u ever' year since we been a-takin' in boarders that th' thing fer y'u is to fix up an' look like y'u was a respectable farm owner and storekeeper, 'stead o' a hog feedin' hired hand?

HENRY (*coming down R.*). Now, Jerushy, y'u know I been busy all mornin', an' I ain't had no time to fix up. I'm a-goin' right now to put on —

JERUSHA. Yes, I know y're a-goin' right now to put on th' worst old duds y'u can find. Th' thing fer y'u to do is to git in there an' put on that alpacky suit, th' one y'u bought five years ago circus day in th'

city. It's plumb hard 'nough to make anything out o' yerself anyways, but y'u got to look as near respectable as y'u can.

HENRY. I can't see no sense in my tryin' to fix up, like some young dood. I ain't a-courtin' no more, an' anyways, them folks that's a-comin' is a-payin' their board. I ain't supposed to be no entertainment feller nohow. I 'low if I put on a collar an' wear shoes 'stead o' boots I'm a-doin' 'bout all that ort to be expected o' me. (*Sits in rocker down R.*)

JERUSHA. Git up out o' that chair. (HENRY *rises suddenly.*) Well, it ain't all that ort to be expected o' y'u, an' I'm th' one that's a-doin' th' expectin'. It ain't enough fer y'u to put on a collar an' keep from a-tuckin' yer pants in them boot tops. Y'u got to watch yer manners a little bit. Them city folks don't like a feller a-settin' at th' table an' a-shovelin' peas in his mouth with a knife, an' they don't care perticler 'bout havin' a feller tryin' to whistle a toon when he's eatin' soup. Y'u want to watch yer manners. I ain't a-wantin' no more boarders run off in th' middle o' th' summer, jus' 'cause y'u can't act decent like at th' table.

HENRY. All right, Jerushy, all right. I'll do th' best I can. I been a-tryin' fer a good many years to do like y'u wanted me to, but I ain't seemed to have much luck. I 'low I'm a-gittin' too old to do much in th' way o' fine manners. An' my manners was good 'nough fer y'u when we didn't have nothin' but one old broken down span o' mules an' ten acres in corn that my old man give us.

JERUSHA. That's jus' th' trouble. Y'u know y'u never had no chanct to learn when y'u was young, an' y'u ain't been willin' to try gittin' any better, now that y're able to take things a little easier. Y're jus' like a chunk o' sandstone—y'u won't take no polish no matter how hard y're rubbed. (HENRY *sits in chair down R.*) Now don't go a-settin' down there, an' then come a-draggin' in with them old clothes on when th' comp'ny comes. (HENRY *rises.*)

HENRY. All right, Jerushy, I reckon y'u know best.

(Exit JERUSHA, L.) By Jiminy, I jus' can't see no use in Jerushy insistin' on me a-fixin' up. It ain't in me. (Sits R.)

(Enter JIM DOBBS, R.; looks about; sees HENRY.)

JIM. Howdy, Henry. (Comes down c.) I was jus' a-passin' by, an' 'lowed I'd drop in t' pass th' time o' day. How's ever'body?

HENRY. Oh, all right, I guess, 'ceptin' me. (Points to chair down L.) Set down over there. (JIM takes seat.) I reckon I can talk a minute. Jerushy's got some more o' them city boarders a-comin', an' she won't hear to nothin' but fer me to put on my Sunday duds an' wear 'em all th' time th' comp'ny's here.

JIM. By crickey, Henry, I wouldn't let no wife o' mine tell me what to wear, an' boss me 'round like that.

JERUSHA (outside, L.). Hen-ree.

HENRY (rising). Well, that's right—but I reckon I better be a-goin', Jim.

JIM. Oh, set down, Henry. Take it easy. Jus' let her see y'u ain't a-goin' to eat outen her hand or dance ever' time she whistles, an' she'll come 'round arter while. Jus' take it easy, Henry, take it easy.

HENRY (resuming seat). I reckon they ain't no need o' bein' in a big hurry.

JERUSHA (thrusting head in door L.). Henry Simpkins, ain't I told y'u once to git a move on an' git ready fer that city comp'ny? (Sees JIM, who rises and goes up c.) Oh, I see. (Enters and advances to c.) Jim Dobbs, I bet y're at th' bottom o' this, a-puttin' my husband up to them stubborn tricks agin. I'd jus' like to have y'u fer a husband 'bout one day. If I wouldn't jus' take some o' them hifalutin notions out o' yer head! You an' yer wife'd both be a sight better off if y'u had sense 'nough to 'tend to yer own business, so's y'u c'd make a livin', 'stead o' dependin' on th' good will an' th' charity o' th' neighbors. I jus' wisht I was yer wife.

JIM (who has edged to door R. as JERUSHA talks).

I'm shore thankful y'u ain't. I'd a durn sight rather spend all night in a graveyard with a ghost than to spend five minutes with you.

(*Exit, R.*)

JERUSHA. Henry Simpkins, I ain't a-goin' t' wait much longer on y'u. (*Goes to door L.*) Don't y'u fergit.

(*Exit, L.*)

HENRY. In a minute, Jerushy, in a minute.

(*Sits R.*)

(*Enter HAL WINSTON, R.*)

WINSTON. Hello, Mr. Simpkins. (*HENRY rises.*) Keep your seat. I just dropped in for a moment. I'm just out for a little afternoon stroll. (*HENRY sits.*)

HENRY (*points to chair down L., and WINSTON takes it*). Set down over there, Mr. Winston. I reckon y're a-findin' it hot 'nough these here —

JERUSHA (*thrusting head in door L.*). Henry Simpkins, what d' y'u mean (*HENRY rises*) a-settin' in here a-talkin' to a no-account scalawag, when I been a-tellin' y'u fer an hour that it's time to git ready fer them city boarders? I thought that there no-account loafer left once. Tell him to git on an' quit foolin' 'round here where he ain't wanted. (*HENRY tries to signal her, and she sees WINSTON, who, puzzled, has risen.*) Laws-a-me, Mr. Winston, however can I apologize 'nough! (*JERUSHA enters and comes down c.*) I shore made a plumb fool out o' myself. I been a-tryin' to git Henry in to dress fer comp'ny, an' th' las' time I called him he was a-talkin' to that worthless Lyin' Jim Dobbs. I never knowed y'u was here, or I shore wouldn't 'a' said what I did. If I'd 'a' knowed Henry was a-entertainin' y'u, I shore would 'a' been as quiet's a mouse.

WINSTON. Oh, that's all right, Mrs. Simpkins. You haven't hurt my feelings. And I assure you I won't detain Mr. Simpkins.

JERUSHA. Well, I'm mighty glad y'u take it that way, but I shore do feel all put out 'bout it. Y'u see, we got some city boarders a-comin' purty soon, an' I always like to see Henry fix up a little more'n ordinary. It's powerful hard to git him to do it, but I shore wouldn't 'a' come talkin' th' way I did if I'd 'a' knowed y'u was here.

WINSTON. May I ask who the boarders are?

JERUSHA. Shore. They's a Mis' Glover an' her daughter an' a friend, but I don't know whether th' friend is a male or a female, an' they're from St. Louis. All I know is they're a-takin' all three rooms, an' a-payin' high so's I won't take no others while they're here, so I reckon they're well fixed.

WINSTON. I have several friends in St. Louis, but no one by the name you mention. And, by the way, I have one request to make, Mrs. Simpkins, that I'm going to ask all you folks to observe. I would greatly prefer not to be introduced to the guests, should I have that pleasure, as an artist. You may tell them I am a banker or something in Chicago and am here for my health. That may be stretching the truth just a little, but I'm sure it won't do any harm.

JERUSHA. Land sakes, Mr. Winston, I'll do it if y'u want me to, an' I'll speak to Tildy an' Bub. But I'd a lot rather tell 'em y'u was a artist. It adds a lot to th' repitashun o' th' place jus' to have a artist a-stickin' 'round.

WINSTON. But you'll do as I ask, won't you, Mrs. Simpkins?

JERUSHA. Land sakes, yes. I never turned nobody down on nothin' like that.

(Enter TILDY, L.)

TILDY. Mis' Simpkins, them potatoes is — (Sees WINSTON.) Laws a mercy, Mr. Winston, I never knowed y'u was here. (Goes down L. to WINSTON.) But I got to go back. (Turns as if to go.)

WINSTON. Well, now that I am here, and you are here, you needn't rush right off, unless those potatoes are burning.

TILDY. Oh, they ain't a-burnin'. They ain't even peeled yet. An' say, Mr. Winston, how's that picter comin' on? Ain't it 'bout finished?

WINSTON. Not quite, Tildy, but I'm making some progress. I hope to have it ready for inspection in a few days. I'm quite sure Mr. and Mrs. Simpkins will be glad to see it. I haven't told you before, but I'm counting on entering it in the exhibit in Chicago this fall.

TILDY. I jus' can't hardly wait.

JERUSHA. Mr. Winston, is that there picter—is Tildy fixed up—I mean, is Tildy — Well, I've hearn a lot 'bout what kind o' picters artists paint, an' what I mean is, is Tildy a-wearin' 'nough clothes so's a respectable like church member c'd look at th' picter without a-blushin'? Tildy's in my care, an' I ain't a-wantin' to have her an' me scandalized.

WINSTON (*laughingly*). Yes, indeed, Mrs. Simpkins. You needn't feel at all worried on that score. In the picture Tildy is wearing her usual dress. She is kneeling beside the spring, looking at her reflection in the water. I think you'll like it.

JERUSHA. Well, I'm powerful relieved. I don't want Tildy a-gettin' int' no bad habits.

WINSTON. I must be going now. You folks want to get ready for your guests. Don't forget, Mrs. Simpkins. Don't tell them I'm a painter. They would probably bother me to death if they knew it.

TILDY. Land sakes, Mr. Winston, can't I tell 'em y're a artist?

WINSTON. No, Tildy, I prefer to be known merely as a business man who is here for his health. (TILDY *is disappointed*.) But you needn't worry. We'll go on with the picture, if you have time. (TILDY *brightens*.) But I must be going now. (*Goes R.*) Perhaps I'll drop around in a day or two. Good-day.

(*Exit, R.*)

JERUSHA (*following him to door*). I'm mighty sorry 'bout sayin' what I did, Mr. Winston. (*Turns*

to TILDY.) Now looky here, Tildy, I ain't altogether satisfied 'bout that picter paintin' business, even if Mr. Winston is a-paintin' y'u jus' like y'u are. Them artist fellers is smooth, an' I'm a-goin' t' be on th' lookout fer y'u. I ain't a-puttin' one bit o' trust in any artist feller.

TILDY. Law me, Mis' Simpkins, he's a perfect gentleman. He couldn't be no bit nicer'n he has been.

JERUSHA. Y'u let him kiss y'u.

TILDY. Well, he was nice 'nough to ask me, an' I jus' couldn't refuse.

JERUSHA. Anyways, I ain't a-goin' to have no more foolishness like that. Let him paint yer picter if he wants to, but paintin' an' kissin's two different things.

VOICE (*outside, R.*). Whoa! Anybody t' home?

JERUSHA. There's them city folks now, an' that good-fer-nothin' Bub ain't here where I told him to be. Henry Simpkins, git out there this minute an' bring in their grips. Step lively now. (*Exit HENRY, R.*) Tildy, git int' th' kitchen an' be a-gittin' supper. Y'u stood in here a-talkin' to that artist feller, an' like's not they won't be a thing on th' stove fit to eat. (*Exit TILDY, L.*) An' I clear fergot to dust in here. What am I a-comin' to, anyway?

(Busies herself with her apron, dusting.)

(Door opens R. and MRS. GLOVER, followed by HELEN and PERCIVAL FUDGETOP, enter, followed by HENRY, bearing grips. MRS. GLOVER, HELEN and FUDGETOP advance to C.)

HENRY (*at door*). Here they be, an' I never did git my duds changed.

JERUSHA. Mr. Simpkins, this ain't th' place to be discussin' things like that. (*Advances to MRS. GLOVER.*) Mis' Glover, I'm mighty glad to meet y'u. I reckon that's who y'u are. (*MRS. GLOVER languidly shakes hands.*) An' this here must be Miss Glover. (*Shakes hands with HELEN.*) An' this here is —

(Goes to FUDGETOP, who surveys her haughtily.)

HELEN. Oh, that's only Mr. Fudgetop, Fudgy for short.

JERUSHA (*shaking hands*). I'm pleased to meet y'u, Mr. Pudgytop.

FUDGETOP. Fudgetop, my good woman, Fudgetop.

JERUSHA. Well, it ain't much worse.

HELEN. Oh, no, it couldn't be.

MRS. GLOVER (*sitting, down R.*). Helen, how many times have I cautioned you to be more respectful? Please accord Mr. Fudgetop the treatment he deserves.

HELEN. I wish I could.

MRS. GLOVER (*to HELEN*). Helen, that will do.

(*Enter BUB, L.*)

BUB. Gosh amighty, they've all come, ain't they? (*Catches sight of FUDGETOP.*) Haw, haw, haw! What's that?

JERUSHA (*to BUB, pointing up L.*). Git in that corner an' stay there till I tell y'u to git out.

MRS. GLOVER. I presume the accommodations here are all strictly modern.

HENRY (C.). Yes'm, they're as nigh modern as kin be got this fur from a railroad. We got —

JERUSHA (L. C.). Henry Simpkins, I'll do th' talkin' fer this family. I think y'll find ever'thing jus' like I writ in my letter. An' I hope y'll be satisfied. We been bothered s' much to-day with callers that we ain't hardly had time to git things straightened out.

HENRY. Yes, I 'lowed to change my —

JERUSHA. Henry Simpkins, drop them grips an' git out.

(HENRY *drops grips and exit, R.*)

BUB. Haw, haw, haw!

JERUSHA (*turning on him*). Git them grips an' take 'em up-stairs this minute. Take them belongin' to th' wimmen folks int' th' big front room. We kin move Miss Helen's later. An' take Mr. Fuzzytop's int' th' room on th' east side.

FUDGETOP. Fudgetop, my good woman, Fudgetop.

JERUSHA. Well, I'll git that name right after a while. Y'u can't expect a busy woman to git onto a name like that short o' three or four tries. Step along there, Bub.

BUB. I'm a-goin' right now.

(BUB laboriously takes up all the grips and exit, L.)

MRS. GLOVER. I am quite anxious to find out one thing, Mrs. Simpkins. And really it was with only one thought in view that I consented to come to a place like this. While I have arranged with you that there shall be no other guests in the house, I don't care to remain in a community where one finds the usual summer guests, especially men. Are there any men about here—that is, men who are here spending their vacations?

JERUSHA. Well, y'u know, as I writ in my last letter, they ain't any men a-stayin' here. They is one city feller in th' community, howsoever, a young feller that lives in a cabin by hisself down th' road a piece.

MRS. GLOVER. Indeed! Is he single?

JERUSHA. Good land, I hope so.

MRS. GLOVER. Does he appear to be at all—well—impressionable?

JERUSHA. Well, now, I jus' can't say as to that, but he ain't no slouch when it comes to looks.

MRS. GLOVER. Do you know anything about him or his antecedents?

JERUSHA. Why, he's from Chicawgo. He's a ar—a business man here for his health. But I'll own right now he don't look as if his health was a-givin' him any great concern.

MRS. GLOVER. I trust he will not cause us any annoyance. Mr. Fudgetop was very considerate in agreeing to come to assist in entertaining my daughter, and I don't care to have her making chance acquaintances, particularly those so easily formed at summer resorts.

HELEN. Oh, Mrs. Simpkins, I'm dreadfully anxious

to know if there are any moonshiners here. This is such a romantic spot, and I've read so much about the Ozark Mountains that I'm just sure there must be a moonshine place here somewhere.

JERUSHA. Land no, Miss Helen, we ain't had none o' them fer years. It ain't that some o' th' men-folks don't like likker's much as they used to, but they can ship it in from Springfield s' much cheaper'n they can make it, an' th' risk ain't s' great.

(BUB enters L. and stands just inside door.)

HELEN. How disappointingly prosaic! I had counted on seeing a real moonshiner and a real place where the moonshine whiskey is made.

JERUSHA. Land sakes, Miss Helen, if they was a moonshine still 'round here anywheres, d' y'u think th' men that run it'd let anybody like you come 'round? Not much they wouldn't.

HELEN. Well, if there aren't any moonshiners, there surely must be a feud in the vicinity. We saw some real mountaineers as we drove over, and I'm sure I shouldn't have been surprised if one of them had offered to shoot us. Do tell me there is a feud near here.

JERUSHA. A feud! I don't believe I ever seen one o' them, but y'u might be able to git one over to th' county seat.

HELEN. Oh, you don't understand. A feud is a bitter feeling between two families, so bitter that the members of one family try to kill the members of the other. It's real romantic to think of meeting persons who are wanting to kill each other.

JERUSHA. Well, I'd think a good deal depended on where y'u met 'em. But if a feud is hatin' one another, y'u ain't likely to find it here. Most o' th' land's too pore even to raise a fuss on.

BUB (*approaching* HELEN). Y'u say one o' them feuds is where y'u hate a feller?

HELEN. Yes, that's a feud.

BUB. Well, they's one here, then.

HELEN. Oh, how delightful! Do tell me about it.

JERUSHA. Miss Helen, that boy ain't got no sense. He don't even know what he's talkin' 'bout.

BUB. I reckon I know when I hate a feller. I'm goin' to knock his head off.

(Makes pugilistic motions.)

HELEN. How very interesting! Tell me about it.

BUB. They ain't much to tell. I want Tildy, an' he's a-tryin' to take her. We got a feud on, all right, only I never knowed what to call it afore.

JERUSHA. Looky here, Bub, that's 'nough out o' you. Git out this instant. *(Exit BUB, L.)* It won't do fer y'u to pay much 'tention to Bub, Miss Helen. He don't mean it.

(Reënter BUB, L.)

BUB *(excited)*. I heard y'u. I heard y'u. Don't mean it, hey? I'm a-goin' to knock him into the middle of next week, I tell y'u.

(He dances around FUDGETOP, making wild passes that FUDGETOP dodges timidly.)

JERUSHA *(to BUB)*. Looky here, Bub, I ain't a-goin' to stand fer no more o' yer foolishness. Take Mr. Fudgetop up to his room.

FUDGETOP *(adjusting monocle)*. Fudgetop, my good woman, Fudgetop!

JERUSHA. Well, I said it'd take me some time to git it. Jus' give me time. Hurry on there, Bub.

BUB *(surveying FUDGETOP)*. Gee, his glasses is broke, an' one o' 'em is stuck in his eye.

(BUB leads the angry FUDGETOP out door L.)

JERUSHA. Now, if you folks'll foller me, I'll show y'u to yer rooms. *(TILDY enters L.)* Tildy, be a-dustin' here.

(Exit JERUSHA, L., followed by MRS. GLOVER and HELEN. WINSTON enters R. TILDY is busily dusting down L.)

WINSTON. Well, Tildy, are the guests here, or are you getting ready for them? (*Comes down R.*)

TILDY. Land, Mr. Winston, y'u almost scared th' life out o' me. (*Crosses to him.*)

WINSTON. Surely not. You seem to be in very good health.

TILDY. But I ain't. An' you wouldn't be if y'd 'a' heered what that foolish Bub told Mis' Simpkins. It plumb upset me.

WINSTON. Indeed! What could Bub have said that would worry you so much?

TILDY. He told Mis' Simpkins 'bout—'bout—well, he said he seen y'u—seen y'u—well, y'u ort to know what he said he seen.

WINSTON. How on earth could I know?

TILDY. He said he seen y'u kiss me.

WINSTON (*smiling*). He did?

TILDY. Yes, he did. An' it made him plumb mad, a-seein' you—us, I mean—when it ain't no more his business than 'tis a chicken's.

WINSTON. I'll have to have a word with Bub. If he has seen anything, he should be enough of a gentleman to know that it isn't polite to tell.

TILDY. Yes, an' he told Mis' Simpkins, an' it made her mad as time. She give me fits.

WINSTON. She seems to be good at that.

TILDY. Yes, an' he said —

(*Enter BUB, L.*)

WINSTON. Ah, there you are, you young reprobate. Come here. (*BUB advances to L. of TILDY.*) So you've been telling tales out of school, have you? Now, look here. You're making a lot out of nothing. If you go around saying there's anything between Tildy and me I'll turn you over my knee and administer a little of mother's celebrated antidote. Do you see the point?

BUB. I don't care. I got a feud on with y'u.

WINSTON. A feud? Do you know what a feud is?

BUB. Sure I do. A feud's where y'u hate a feller.

WINSTON. So you have a feud on with me. Well,

there's only one thing left for us to do. That's to have a duel.

BUB. What's that?

WINSTON. And you don't know what a duel is? I'll tell you. It's the natural result of a feud. Two men who hate each other—sometimes they don't even do that—decide to fight it out. (*He pretends fierce anger. BUB looks scared.*) Sometimes they use swords and sometimes they use pistols. Which do you prefer?

BUB. I don't prefer neither one. I jus' got a feud on, not a duel.

WINSTON. Then I fear I shall have to brand you as a coward. (*BUB looks scared.*)

(*Enter JERUSHA, L., followed by MRS. GLOVER and HELEN. BUB and TILDY cross to L.*)

JERUSHA. Well I declare, if here ain't Mr. Winston. Mis' Glover, I want t' interdooce a real ar ——

WINSTON (*down L.*). Ahem!

JERUSHA (*down L. C.*). A real broken down business man to y'u, who's come here fer his health. This here's Mr. Winston, Mis' Glover an' Miss Helen. Bub, Tildy, ain't you got nothin' better to do than stand there starin'?

(*BUB and TILDY exeunt L., followed by JERUSHA.*)

WINSTON (*to ladies*). Indeed, I am quite delighted to meet you. Mrs. Simpkins told me some time ago she was expecting you. I trust you will enjoy your stay in the Ozarks, and if I may be of any assistance, I hope you will feel free to call upon me.

HELEN (*C.*). There's only one way you can assist me in having a good time, Mr. Winston. That is to point out a real moonshiner or a real feudist.

WINSTON. I am afraid, Miss Glover, that you will find I am of very little service in such a venture. I don't believe I would make a very good detective.

HELEN. Surely you don't mean that in such a romantic place as this there are no moonshiners and no feudists?

WINSTON. I am afraid not. Of course, the next man I meet may be a moonshiner, but he certainly will fool me if he proves to be anything other than a very peaceful citizen of the Ozarks.

MRS. GLOVER. Really, Mr. Winston, I fear you will not be able to provide any entertainment for my daughter. She has set her heart upon finding a romantic character, but I feel quite sure she is doomed to disappointment, and her time here will be so taken up with Mr. Fudgetop that she can hardly be expected to think of these dreadful characters very long. (*FUDGETOP enters L. and comes down L. c.*) And permit me to present the gentleman whom I just mentioned. Mr. Fudgetop, Mr. Winston. I believe that is the name?

WINSTON. It is, Mrs. Glover. I am indeed glad to meet you, Mr. Fudgetop. I have been trying to convince Miss Glover that this is a very peaceful community, but she insists upon romance.

FUDGETOP. Can it be possible? I hardly thought Miss Glover would care for any romance, so long as I am here.

HELEN. But I want to figure in a real romance. I want to meet a real man of the hills, who isn't afraid of anything.

FUDGETOP. Quite so, quite so. I am here. I must admit that I have had somewhat more culture than these fellows about here, but then I am not afraid of anything. And that ought to be the real test. Really, Miss Helen, I can't see any reason for your taking up with any strangers (*motioning to WINSTON*) so long as I am here.

MRS. GLOVER. Yes, indeed, my dear, I can't see how you can have the slightest interest in any one else, so long as Mr. Fudgetop is here.

HELEN. Oh, pshaw! There are lots of men in the world beside Mr. Fudgetop.

(*MRS. GLOVER and FUDGETOP annoyed.*)

WINSTON (*glancing at watch*). I fear I must be going. Permit me again to say I am very glad to have

met all of you, and I trust I may assist in making your stay here pleasant. Good-day, all.

(Exit, R.)

MRS. GLOVER. Well, I'm glad he's gone. I must caution you once more, daughter, not to strike up acquaintances so quickly with persons of whom you know nothing.

FUDGETOP. Yes, it's quite common, don't you know, to be so willing to converse with strangers.

HELEN. Well, it may be a little common, but it's interesting to talk to a real man once in a while, anyway.

(Enter JIM, R.)

JIM. Howdy, ever'body. Jus' thought I'd drop in a minute er two, to see whether th' new boarders got here safe. *(Sees they are all strangers.)* Oh, excuse me. *(About to retire.)*

HELEN *(approaching JIM)*. Oh, don't go. Are you a native? Have you lived here all your life?

(Brings him c.)

JIM. All of it so far.

HELEN. How delightful! Do tell me whether there are any moonshiners about here, or any feudists, men who hate each other and who want to kill each other.

JIM. Wal, now, come to think o' th' situation —

MRS. GLOVER. Indeed, my man, we really don't care to hear anything just now. My daughter is a bit impetuous. She really doesn't think what she says.

JIM. Seein' how th' land lies, I think I'll go an' git a drink. *(Going L.)*

HELEN. Please wait a minute. *(Goes to JIM.)*

MRS. GLOVER. Daughter, daughter, how often must I tell you not to be so ready to pick up these creatures who cross your path?

HELEN. I came here to the Ozarks to find a romance, and I'm going to do it.

(Brings JIM down R.)

MRS. GLOVER. Such unappreciative conduct. Really, it is beyond me. (*Goes to FUDGETOP, L.*)

JIM. Say, I reckon I better be goin'.

HELEN. Oh, don't hurry. This really is such a romantic country that I want to find out more about it. Won't you tell me something about the country?

JIM. They ain't much t' tell. Th' country's too dern rocky fer a man to farm, an' most o' th' time it's too dern dry fer pasture, an' th' result is that they ain't much thrives here 'ceptin' ticks an' chiggers. An' they ain't much romance to either one o' them.

HELEN. But surely there are some stories of unusual interest, some adventures.

JIM. Oh, yes, they's plenty o' them. They happen ever' once in a while when I'm fishin'. Th' las' time I went fishin' I hooked a bass, an' th' thing played s' hard it got all tired out afore I landed it. Honest Injun, that fish was s' tired a-fightin', it got plumb exhausted so's it couldn't swim—an' drowned afore I c'd git it on th' bank.

HELEN. The poor thing! What did you do with it?

JIM. Well, I started to throw it back in th' crick, an' then I rickollected it was dead, an' wouldn't come to life to enjoy swimmin' no more, so I took it home, an' th' ole woman cooked it.

HELEN. How thoughtful! But aren't there any real romances here? Aren't there any moonshiners or feudists?

JIM. Come to think o' it now, they is one real bad moonshiner here. I ain't a-tellin' his name, fer that might git me int' trouble, an' I ain't a-wantin' to git shot. This here's a bad actor. He's killed 'bout a dozen men er so, an' he's swore they ain't nobody a-goin' to ketch him alive.

FUDGETOP (*to MRS. GLOVER*). Don't you really think we'd better be leaving a place like this? Really, I am afraid for Miss Helen to —

JIM. Bad man, he is. He wouldn't think nothin' o' shootin' all o' us, if he thought it'd help him git away from th' revenoo. He told me they's a feller

here a-pretendin' to be a boarder, but he's a revenoo. This feller I know—he's goin' to git him.

(FUDGETOP *nervous*.)

FUDGETOP. Mrs. Glover, don't you think this will be too exciting for your charming daughter's nerves? Don't you think we had better find another place to spend the summer?

JIM. As I was a-sayin', he's one o' these here fellers that can't eat breakfast with any sort o' relish 'less he's killed a feller that mornin'. He's th' most wickedest —

MRS. GLOVER. Dear me, we can't stay here.

FUDGETOP. No, we must be going at once.

HELEN. You two may go at once, but I'm going to stay here until I see that man, if I have to stay summer and winter.

JIM. Great Jehoshaphat! She'll shore have to live here till she dies.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Interior of HENRY SIMPKINS' store. Shelves and counter at L. of stage; barrel down c., with boxes at L. and R. of it; chair down R.; barrels, boxes, show-cases, etc., up C. and R.*

(Curtain rising discloses JIM seated at L. of barrel, HENRY behind counter L.)

JIM. Say, Henry, that there dood a-stayin' with youens is th' dodgastedest fool I ever seen. He kep' a-pesterin' me to go a-fishin' till I finally took him 'long with me to th' river t'other day.

HENRY. I seen ye goin' down the road. What kind of a uniform was that he had on?

JIM. Search me. General in the milishy, I reckon. An' he had a whole trunk full o' fishin' truck. They warn't nothin' to suit him. Th' river wuz either too deep er too shaller, th' water wuz either too muddy er too clear, th' current wuz either too swift er not swift 'nough, thar wuz too many clouds er th' sun was a-shinin' too bright, an' out o' 'bout a bushel o' flies that dern idjit couldn't find one that suited him. Say, if every drop o' water in th' river was a bass, he'd kick 'cause they warn't whales.

HENRY. That dood don't look like no fisherman to me. Looks to me like he's a sucker, an' old lady Glover's a-fishin' fer him. He's landed all right, but that don't end th' business by a jugful. Miss Helen's th' bait, but she don't seem to like her job.

JIM. Gosh all fish hooks! If a gal's got any spirit at all, she ain't a-wantin' to be hitched up with that dodgasted imitashun o' a human critter.

HENRY. She's got spirit, all right. Her maw ain't won out yit.

JIM. No, an' I bet she don't. Th' gal's got too

much spunk. I'd bet she gives th' old lady th' slip yet, an' runs off with that there artist.

HENRY. She shore seems to like him, all right, but I don't reckon she knows he's a artist. Y'u see, afore them city folks come, Mister Winston asked Jerushy an' th' rest o' us not to say nothin' 'bout him bein' a artist. It shore makes a feller feel kind o' suspicious, though, don't it?

JIM. Yes, but it don't make a feller feel suspicious nothin' like ol' lady Glover feels suspicious. She ain't willin' to let th' gal an' Winston in the same room.

HENRY. Well, all this ain't a-gettin' nowhere, so fer as that domino game's concerned. I'm a-feelin' right trim like fer a game to-day.

JIM. So'm I. Fetch them dominoes an' we'll see who's bes' man.

(HENRY brings dominoes and places them on barrel.

JIM sits L. and HENRY R. of barrel.)

HENRY (*shuffling dominoes*). Seein' as how I'm a-wantin' to play this here game, I reckon it'll be just my luck to have Jerushy call 'bout th' time we git started.

JIM (*selecting his dominoes*). Well, jus' take it easy. Her callin' won't hurt nothin'.

HENRY (*studying dominoes*). No, I 'low her callin' won't hurt nothin', but it's havin' her come arter me that I don't like.

JIM. Seein' as I got th' double six, I reckon I better play fust. (*Lays down double six.*) I s'pose y'u heerd 'bout a grand jury a-bein' ordered over to Forsyth?

HENRY (*laying down domino*). There's th' six-three. That gives me a start o' fifteen. No, I never heerd nothin' 'bout it. What's th' grand jury a-goin' to do? Pile up costs agin th' taxpayers, I reckon. Seems to me th' community's been a-gittin' on sort o' peaceful like.

JIM. Things has been quiet 'round here, but I hear they's been a sight o' trouble over back o' Bristle Ridge. They's been somebody runnin' a still over there. I

reckon it won't be long till we hev th' guv'ment down on us. They ain't been a rev'noo 'round here fer mighty nigh a year now.

JERUSHA (*outside R.*). Hen-ree!

HENRY. I knowed it, an' me with that start o' fifteen.

JIM. Jus' keep on a-playin', an' mebbe she'll fergit.

HENRY. Fergit! Jerushy fergit! Gosh a-mighty, Jim, y'u ain't been married to her nigh on to thirty year, er y'u wouldn't be a-makin' no rash statement like that.

JIM. No, I ain't been married t' Jerushy nigh on to thirty year, an' I reckon that's one thing I got to be thankful fer each night when I say my prayers.

JERUSHA (*outside R.*). Hen-ree! Hen-ree Simpkins!

HENRY. All right, Jerushy, I'm a-comin'.

JERUSHA (*outside R.*). Yes, I know y're a-comin', but when?

HENRY. Right now.

JIM. Jus' take it easy, Henry, take it easy.

HENRY. Yes, y've told me that two er three times, an' ever' time I try it, th' result don't sound nothin' like takin' it easy.

JIM. Then why don't y'u try feedin' her a leetle taffy? Lots o' times a leetle lump o' sugar'll bring th' wildes' horse up from th' pasture.

HENRY. They ain't nothin' that suits Jerushy, 'ceptin' to go when y're called. (*Rises.*) She's called a couple o' times, an' 'twon't be long now till she'll be a-comin' in.

(*Enter JERUSHA, R. Advances down R. C.*)

JERUSHA. Looky here, Henry Simpkins, did y'u think I was a-practicin' singin' when I was a-standin' out there a-callin' yer name?

HENRY. No, Jerushy, I never thought nothin' like that, but I got plumb interested in listenin' to Jim here. I was jus' a-startin' when y'u come in.

JERUSHA. I might 'a' knowed that good-fer-nothin' Jim was here. I reckon if I was a-dyin' an' y'u was

in here a-talkin' to Jim, y'd jus' go on a-talkin', an' let me go on a-dyin'.

JIM. Gosh all hemlock, Jerushy, seems y'u ain't a-feelin' well to-day.

JERUSHA. I'd like to know who could be a-feelin' well, with such trash as you a-loafin' 'round a-keepin' their husband from workin'.

JIM. Great Christopher, Jerushy, them city folks'd be surprised to hear y'u talk like that.

JERUSHA. Y'u ain't fool 'nough to think they'd blame me fer a-talkin' that way 'bout y'u, air y'u?

JIM. That ain't what I mean at all, Jerushy. Y'u see, they're a-thinkin' y're sich a fine dispositioned woman that they'd be plumb supprised to death to hear y'u a-talkin' that away.

JERUSHA. Y'u don't think y're a-goin' to catch me on any sich taffy as that, do y'u, Jim Dobbs?

JIM. Wal, if y'u don't care nothin' fer th' fav'r'ble 'pinion o' them that's a-payin' y'u board, all right. It ain't nothin' to me.

JERUSHA (*a little mollified*). I allers did pride myself on a-havin' boarders set a sight o' store by me. Only I was a-thinkin' y'u had somethin' up yer sleeve.

JIM. It wasn't nothin' like that, Jerushy. I wuz jus' a-tellin' what I heerd 'em sayin' 'mongst 'emselves t'other day.

HENRY. What is it y're a-wantin' me to do, Jerushy?

JERUSHA. They's some wood to be cut, an' some peaches to be fetched from the fur orchard.

HENRY. Well, we was purty nigh through, an' I was 'lowin' to beat Jim, seein' I got sich a good start.

JERUSHA. Well, seein' as how it's middlin' early, I reckon y'u might's well finish that game. But don't do no foolin' 'round arter y'u git through.

(*Exit, R.*)

HENRY (*resuming seat as JERUSHA exits*). All right. I'll be 'long in a minute.

JIM. I tol' y'u so, Henry. They's more'n one way to manage a woman, an' if one way won't do it, all

that's necessary is to find some other way. They's a key fer every door, all right, but it ain't allus easy to git th' right one.

HENRY. Yes, I reckon they's a key fer every door, all right, but they's some of 'em git lost.

(Enter HELEN, R.)

HELEN (*coming down R.*). Dear me, this must be an exciting game. Who is winning?

JIM. Looks like Henry here is a-gittin' a mighty good start.

HELEN. Surely you won't let him beat you. Don't you remember telling me what a good domino player you are?

JIM. I reckon I'll hev to beat him now, er y'll be a-thinkin' I was a-lyin'.

HENRY (*laying down domino*). This here four an' th' six on t'other end makes me ten more. I'm twenty-five now, an' y'u ain't even scored.

HELEN. Honestly, Mr. Dobbs, is he winning?

JIM. Oh, I ain't started to play yit. (*Lays down domino.*) I'll jus' git rid o' this here double four, while they's a chanct.

HENRY (*laying down domino*). An' I'll jus' lay down this six-two, makin' me ten more, an' thirty-five to yer nothin'.

HELEN. I knew it, I knew it. I hope he beats you well, Mr. Dobbs. It will serve you right for being so boastful.

HENRY (*laying down domino*). I'm playin' th' two-five.

JIM. Jus' like I wanted. I'm a-playin' th' four-five an' countin' ten.

HENRY. Walked right into it, didn't y'u? I'm a-playin' th' double five an' countin' fifteen more, an' that makes me fifty an' out.

JIM. Gosh a-mighty! But then it ain't no wonder I lost, seein' as how I had to entertain th' wimmen folks. First they wuz Jerushy an' then come Miss Helen, an' I jus' natchally couldn't think no more 'bout th' game.

HELEN. Mr. Dobbs, that isn't one bit kind of you. You should take your defeat like a man, instead of blaming it on the women. But, after all, that's a man's way.

HENRY. Kind o' sorry Jerushy let me stay to finish th' game, ain't y'u, Jim?

JIM. By crickey, I'll beat y'u th' nex' time.

HENRY. Oh, I reckon it'll be 'bout as easy th' nex' time.

(Enter JERUSHA, R., in time to hear last words. Comes down R.)

JERUSHA. If y'u don't come on an' 'tend to things 'round here in better shape, they won't be no next time in this triflin' domino playin' business.

(HENRY rises.)

HELEN. Oh, Mrs. Simpkins, you shouldn't scold Mr. Simpkins so. He has just beaten the great champion, the Honorable Mr. James Dobbs.

JERUSHA. Onery James Dobbs, y'u better say. An' if I had a husband that couldn't beat Jim Dobbs a-doin' anything 'cept lyin', I'd quit him an' git a new one. But they ain't no danger. They ain't nobody kin beat Jim Dobbs a-lyin'.

JIM. Y'u shore air compliment'ry, Jerushy.

JERUSHA. Well, if th' truth's a compliment, y're welcome to it. But I got to be a-gittin' out o' here. Come on, Henry. (Goes to door R.)

JIM (to HENRY). Y'u won't do it nex' time, by crickey.

HENRY. Y'u been a-sayin' that ever since I've knowed y'u, an' it ain't often come true.

JERUSHA (at door R.). Come on here, Henry Simpkins.

HENRY. All right, Jerushy, I'm a-comin'.

(Follows JERUSHA out door R.)

HELEN (taking seat HENRY had). Now, Mr.

Dobbs, aren't you going to finish that story you started to tell me the other day about the moonshiner over on Whistle Ridge?

JIM. Bristle Ridge, Miss Helen. They ain't no sich place 'round here as Whistle Ridge.

HELEN. Well, it doesn't make much difference anyway, just so you tell me the story.

JIM. Le' me see. I wuz a-tellin' y'u 'bout th' way he kep' a-dodgin' th' rev'noo from Springfield, warn't I? (HELEN nods.) Wal, y'u see, he jus' had a leetle still outfit, thet wouldn't make more'n ten er twelve gallons at a run. He kep' th' outfit in a cave till th' guv'ment got nex' to that, an' then he moved int' a ol' hanted cabin. Then, when th' trail got too hot thar, he pulled off th' bes' part o' th' hull show. He sneaked th' hull dern still outfit int' th' church house an' hid it in th' stove. They warn't no one 'bout th' church 'cept on Sundays, an' they warn't no partickler danger o' this here chap a-gittin' caught, seein's he never went nigh th' place when they was any sarvices a-goin' on. He'd 'a' got by with it all right, if they hadn't come a cold snap one prayer meetin' night airly in th' fall, an' th' pastor went in to build a fire an' found th' hull still outfit. I reckon he'd 'a' kep' his mouth shut if th' still hadn't been run in a church house, but that wuz a-goin' a leetle might stronger'n he c'd stand.

HELEN. What sort of a looking man is he? Is he young and strong and handsome?

JIM. T' be sure he is. He's a fine lookin' feller, he is. Mebbe y'll git a chanct to see him, an' mebbe y'u won't.

HELEN. Oh, I must see him. Your story is so romantic I couldn't go back to St. Louis without havin' the pleasure of seeing a man like that.

JIM. Yas, that's a tolerable romantic story. An' I 'low y're sort o' interested in this here romantic business, ain't y'u? Leastways, if y'u ain't, some one else is. That there Fudgepot keeps a-trailin' 'round arter y'u like a pup arter a kid with a string. Seems sort o' like y're a leetle interested in him, too.

HELEN. I'm afraid it's hardly correct to say that I

am interested in him. Mother seems to be, but it isn't catching.

JIM. Oh, I don' know. Seems like her hull interest is in a-ketchin' him fer you.

HELEN. Then I fear her interest is being wasted. What's become of Mr. Winston? He was here a couple of days ago, and was coming back the next evening, but I haven't seen him.

JIM. Y'u ain't seen him lately, eh? Y'u don't reckon he's got jealous of Fudgetop, an' lit out, do y'u?

HELEN. Nonsense. I like to have him come around occasionally. He's such a relief from Mr. Fudgetop.

JIM. Sort o' medicine, eh? Wal, they's some medicine that's sweet an' they's some that's bitter.

HELEN. Yes, and there is some that isn't either, but is just medicine.

JIM. Then I 'low y'u calc'late he's jus' so-so.

HELEN. You are as poor a guesser as you are a domino player.

JIM. Now looky here, Miss Helen, that ain't hardly fair. Y'u come a-lookin' on, an' I jus' natchally got flustered.

(Enter BUB, R. Comes down back of barrel.)

BUB. Say, hev you-uns saw Tildy? I'm a-lookin' fer her, an' I ain't havin' no luck. She wuz a-goin' to set out in th' swing a while with me when she got th' dishes done up, an' now I kain't find her nowheres.

JIM. She's give y'u th' slip. Y'u don't 'low she wants to be a-settin' 'round with y'u, do y'u, when they's danger o' people a-seein' y'u t'gether?

BUB. Shore, she ain't ashamed o' bein' saw with me. I'm a-goin' to make her keer fer me, I am. I bin a-readin' a book what tells how to make th' gals fall in love with y'u, an' I'm a-goin' to make her fall in love with me.

(Pulls small book from pocket and opens it.)

HELEN. Perhaps she's waiting to see how the feud turns out.

JIM. Feud? What feud?

HELEN. Bub has a feud on with a man whom he says is trying to take Tildy away from him. Bub's going to kill him.

JIM (*laughing*). Who, Bub? Kill him, hey? Sounds real serious.

BUB (*coming around in front of barrel, c.*). All right; you kin laugh, but I'm goin' to git him some day.

JIM. Who is it, Bub?

BUB. Winston!

(HELEN and JIM, *surprised, turn toward BUB suddenly.*)

HELEN. } What!
JIM. }

BUB. Yes, sir. He's tryin' to take Tildy, an' I won't stand fer it.

HELEN. Oh, Bub, you must be mistaken.

BUB. No, I ain't, neither.

JIM. What's Mister Winston been a-doin', Bub, makin' eyes at Tildy?

BUB. Worse'n that. He's been a-kissin' her.

HELEN (*laughing*). Oh, come now, Bub, you're letting Mr. Winston play a joke on you by telling things.

BUB. I ain't a-carin' fer what he's been a-sayin'. It's what he's been a-doin' that I don't like, an' that's a-kissin' Tildy.

JIM. Who tol' you, Bub?

BUB. Nobody tol' me. I seed it.

HELEN (*haughtily*). Well, I did think Mr. Winston was a gentleman.

BUB. Golly, I don't blame y'u fer a-gittin' mad. It orter make y'u as mad as it does me.

HELEN (*coldly*). Mad! I don't know what you mean. What Mr. Winston does is a matter of complete indifference to me.

BUB. Wal, y'u shore looked like y'u wuz plumb mad.

JIM. Wasn't y'u a-talkin' 'bout medicine a while ago, Miss Helen—medicine that warn't neither sweet ner bitter? Seems like this here dose had jus' a leetle o' th' bitter in it.

HELEN. Really, Mr. Dobbs, I fail to see any occasion for such remarks. It's quite evident, Bub, that Tildy is not here. Perhaps you had better look for her somewhere else. (*Goes up c.*)

BUB. All right, seein' as how y'u don't want me, I'll be a-movin' 'long. But remember, I give y'u fair warnin'.

(*Exit BUB, door R.*)

JIM. I don't reckon they's any cause fer alarm, Miss Helen. Bub's prob'ly been a-dreamin' a lot o' that stuff. I don't think they's any need o' worryin' 'bout Mr. Winston a-carin' fer Tildy.

HELEN. He can care for any one he pleases. It is nothing to me.

JIM. Wal now, they ain't no pertickler reason fer gittin' uppish. I jus' 'lowed from th' way Mr. Winston's been a-actin' that he sort o' took a likin' to y'u. An' I sort o' figgered out that y'u warn't alt'gether unwillin'.

HELEN. Really, Mr. Dobbs, your allusions are quite unwarranted, and annoying as well.

JIM. Seein' as how that's th' case, I reckon I better shut up.

(*Enter TILDY, R.*)

TILDY. Howdy, ever'body. I'm a-lookin' fer somebody.

HELEN. Mr. Winston is not here.

JIM. Bub jus' left, but he never said whar he wuz a-goin'.

TILDY (*going up c. to HELEN*). I reckon I ain't a-foolin' my time away a-lookin' fer Bub. How'd y'u know I was a-lookin' fer Mr. Winston, Miss Helen?

JIM. Bub's been in here a-tellin' things 'bout y'u an' him.

TILDY. I ain't a-carin' nothin' 'bout what Bub's been a-tellin' 'bout him an' me. What I want to know is what y'u been a-hearin' 'bout me an' Mr. Winston.

JIM. Seems as how Mr. Winston sort o' fergot hisself an' kissed y'u.

TILDY. Fergot hisself nothin'. He ast me, an' I didn't see no reason fer refusin'.

HELEN. Indeed, I am wholly at a loss to understand how you can be so shameless.

TILDY. What is they to be 'shamed of in bein' kissed? All the girls I know gets kissed.

HELEN. Such caresses ordinarily are for those who are engaged. But I presume you and Mr. Winston are engaged, so, no doubt, you did perfectly right.

(Comes down c.)

TILDY. No, we ain't engaged. Mr. Winston just likes me, an' I ain't no ways a-feelin' mean toward Mr. Winston. *(Follows HELEN down c.)* But here lately Mr. Winston's took up with y'u a sight.

HELEN. That will do, Tildy. I am not in the habit of having the slightest interest in those who are so far beneath me.

JIM. Hones', now, Miss Helen, y'u don't think Mr. Winston is sunk s' low, jus' 'cause he kissed Tildy, do y'u?

TILDY. They ain't neither on y'u tol' me yit where Mr. Winston's at.

HELEN. Perhaps Mr. Dobbs can tell you. I am sure I neither know nor care. *(Goes up c.)*

TILDY. Then I reckon I better go an' look fer him.

(Starts up R.)

HELEN. Yes, I am quite sure you won't find him here.

TILDY. I b'lieve I'll be a-goin'. *(Goes to door R.)* I hope y'u won't be a-tryin' to take Mr. Winston from me, Miss Helen.

HELEN *(pointing)*. There is the door.

TILDY. All right. I'm a-goin'.

(Exit, R.)

HELEN. The very idea! How can that girl dare suggest that I am interested in Mr. Winston?

(Comes down L. to JIM.)

JIM. I reckon that'll make Fudgepot feel a dern sight easier. I 'low he's been a-worryin' somewhat fer fear y'u wuz becomin' interested in Mr. Winston, an' I 'low things wuz a-lookin' thet way to me. But, seein' as how I had th' dope all wrong, y'u kin be interested in Fudgepot arter all.

HELEN. Why do you persist with your annoying remarks, Mr. Dobbs? You seem to think I have only two men to choose from. And since you have spoken on the subject so frankly, I may suggest that while Mr. Fudgetop is far above this fellow Winston he is not a man who could arouse any woman's interest.

(Goes R.)

JIM. Wal, I reckon y're right thar. They ain't no cause to quarrel on that p'int.

(Enter FUDGETOP, R. Comes down back of barrel.)

FUDGETOP. Ah, Miss Helen, I have been looking everywhere for you. I'm quite delighted at finding you.

HELEN. I am sure you are no more delighted than I. I was just hoping you would come soon.

(Goes C. to FUDGETOP.)

JIM *(aside)*. Wal, what d' y'u think o' that?

FUDGETOP. Perhaps you would enjoy going for a walk.

HELEN. I am sure it would be delightful.

JIM *(down L.)*. Great Christopher! When it comes to turnin' 'bout face, a Hun with a couple o' good Americans arter him ain't in it with a woman.

HELEN *(somewhat confused)*. Don't you think we might enjoy sitting here a while? Mr. Dobbs is very good company.

JIM *(aside)*. Gosh-a-mighty! An' a minute ago

she couldn't find no words strong 'nough to bawl me out.

FUDGETOP. Really, my dear Miss Helen, I have something important to say to you. Are you trying to tease me by making me jealous of Mr. Dobbs? Ha, ha, ha, that's what I call a good joke.

JIM. Mebbe that's why Miss Helen's been with Mr. Winston s' much lately, jus' tryin' to make y'u jealous.

HELEN (*angrily*). Mr. Dobbs!

FUDGETOP. Bah Jove, that's almost an insult, don't you know.

JIM. Wal, it warn't such a turribl' insult till that thar Bub turned his mouth loose a leetle while ago.

FUDGETOP. Turned his mouth loose? Really, Miss Helen, the fellow uses such shockingly bad grammar.

JIM. Yas, I reckon my grammar's purty bad, but, seein's how I kain't have both, I 'low I'd rather have sense than grammar.

FUDGETOP. Bah Jove, do you mean to insinuate anything?

JIM. Oh, no, nothin' y'u c'd understand.

(*Enter MRS. GLOVER, R. Comes down R.*)

MRS. GLOVER. Ah, Mr. Fudgetop, I have found you at last. And with my daughter, too. I might have known it. I am going for a little stroll. Won't you two come with me?

FUDGETOP (C.). Certainly. Let's be going, Miss Helen.

HELEN (R. C.). I believe I'll stay here. I took quite a long walk by myself this afternoon, and I'm tired.

MRS. GLOVER (*down R.*). But we are not going far, daughter, and perhaps I shall have something to say to you and Mr. Fudgetop.

FUDGETOP. We must hear what your mother has to say, by all means, Miss Helen.

HELEN. Oh, she's told me often enough. I don't have to go walking to hear that.

MRS. GLOVER. Surely you should be pleased, daugh-

ter, to have Mr. Fudgetop's company, even if you don't care for my presence.

JIM. Thet there shore is somethin' to give y'u lots o' pleasure, Miss Helen. They ain't many gals thet wouldn't jump at th' chanct to go walkin' with Mr. Fudgetop. Jus' think how much more pleasure that'd be than goin' walkin' with Mr. Winston.

HELEN. Mr. Dobbs, I shall feel grateful to you if you do not mention the name of that odious man again in my presence.

MRS. GLOVER. Yes, indeed, don't mention the name of that odious man again in her presence.

FUDGETOP. No, bah Jove, unless you want to settle with me, don't mention the name of that odious man again in her presence.

(Enter HENRY, R. Comes down L.)

HELEN. Your coarse effort at humor is most unwelcome.

MRS. GLOVER. Yes, indeed.

FUDGETOP. Yes, indeed.

JIM. Yas, indeed.

HENRY. Yes, indeed.

MRS. GLOVER *(turning upon HENRY)*. What have you to do with this?

HENRY. Nothin', same as Jim.

MRS. GLOVER. Come, children, let us go.

(MRS. GLOVER, followed by FUDGETOP and HELEN, exeunt, R.)

JIM *(down L.)*. She called him a odious person.

HENRY. Who? *(Crosses R.)*

JIM. Miss Helen.

HENRY. Who called Miss Helen a odious person?

JIM. Nobody. She done th' callin' herself.

HENRY. Well, who'd she call that?

JIM. Winston.

HENRY. Great Christopher! She's sort o' changed her mind, ain't she?

JIM. Nope.

HENRY. Jus' thinks she has, eh?

JIM. Nope.'

(HENRY crosses to JIM.)

HENRY. Say, what in thunder air y'u a-drivin' at? She ain't changed her mind, she ain't thought she has, an' she called that feller Winston a odious person arter bein' with him 'bout all th' time durin' th' last few days. What is she a-doin', tryin' to fool her maw an' that dood?

JIM. Nope.

HENRY. Then what in tarnation thunder is she a-doin'?

JIM. Jus' sort o' got her dander up agin Winston.

HENRY. What's he been a-doin' t' her?

JIM. Nothin'.

HENRY. Jim Dobbs, air y'u goin' crazy, er ain't y'u jus' got no sense?

JIM. Neither on 'em.

HENRY. Would y'u mind explainin' yerself?

JIM. Nope.

HENRY. Then cut loose.

JIM. Thet gal's in love with Winston.

HENRY. She called him a odious person.

JIM. Wal, ain't thet what I tol' y'u?

HENRY. Yes, an' that don't sound like no lovin' game to me.

JIM. Winston kissed Tildy t'other day.

HENRY. What's that there got to do with this here?

JIM. Everything.

HENRY. How d' y'u figger that out?

JIM. Bub come in here a leetle while ago an' tol' Miss Helen 'bout Winston a-kissin' Tildy. She flew offen th' han'le right then. Hearin' that Winston kissed another gal jus' natchally upsot her. When a gal fusses 'bout a feller kissin' some other gal, thet means she's in love with him. See?

HENRY. Shore. I see now. Jim, I jus' didn't know y'u was that smart.

JIM. It ain't that I got much sense. It's jus' thet y'u ain't got no sense 'tall.

HENRY. Jim Dobbs, words like them is a compli-

ment, a-comin' from you. But (*drawing back fist*) I got a dern good notion to knock th' tar out o' y'u, anyways.

JIM (*squaring arms for fight*). Come on, y'u dodgasted ol' checker playin' joke.

(*Enter HELEN, R. Comes down L. between HENRY and JIM.*)

HELEN. Why, Mr. Simpkins—Mr. Dobbs, what on earth is the matter?

JIM (*laughing*). We been a-payin' compliments back an' forth, an' words ain't strong 'nough.

HELEN. I began to think I was going to see some one murdered; both of you were glaring at each other so fiercely.

HENRY. No danger o' anybody bein' killed. Jim couldn't kill me, an' he ain't worth killin'.

(*Goes up L. and arranges goods on shelves, etc.*)

JIM. I thought y'u wuz a-goin' fer a walk, Miss Helen, you an' yer maw an' Fudgepot. (*Crosses R.*)

HELEN. I got tired and told them to go by themselves. (*Takes seat L. of checker stand.*)

JIM. Wuz y'u tired o' th' comp'ny, er tired o' th' walk?

HELEN. What a foolish question.

JIM. What a plumb wise answer.

HELEN. I think I could have walked a little longer, if I had cared to.

JIM. I 'low y'u wouldn't o' been s' tired if y'u had Mr. Winston 'stead o' Mr. Fudgepot 'long with y'u.

HENRY. Even if he did kiss Tildy.

HELEN. I am quite sure that Mr. Winston's love affairs do not interest me in the slightest. It makes no difference to me whom Mr. Winston kisses.

(*Enter WINSTON, R.*)

WINSTON. Hello, Henry. (*HELEN jumps up, startled.*) Why, Miss Glover, this must be my lucky day. Mrs. Simpkins said you had gone for a walk.

(*Advances down c.*)

HELEN (*coldly*). So I did, but I returned.

WINSTON (*puzzled*). Yes, so I see. In fact, I would have known it by this time, even if you hadn't told me.

HELEN (*haughtily*). Really, Mr. Winston, I can see no reason for your sarcasm.

WINSTON. Miss Glover, I am completely at a loss to understand your meaning. Have I said or done anything to offend you?

HELEN (*down L.*). There is such a thing, Mr. Winston, as carrying familiarity too far.

WINSTON (*down c.*). Miss Glover, I have tried at all times to conduct myself toward you —

JIM (*down R.*). Tarnation, Mr. Winston, I 'low y'u ain't as bright as I reckoned y'u wuz. It ain't th' way y'u treated her that's a-causin' th' trouble.

HELEN. Mr. Dobbs, your remarks are —

HENRY (*coming down L.*). Sort o' to th' p'int, eh, Jim? I reckon, Mr. Winston, it ain't how y'u treated Miss Helen that's started th' rumpus. It's how y'u treated some one else.

JIM. Mebbe we're both wrong, Henry. Mebbe th' trouble is 'cause he didn't treat Miss Helen like he treated somebody else. How 'bout that, Miss Helen?

HELEN. I shall go at once. You are insulting.

WINSTON (*stopping her*). Wait a moment, please. (*To JIM.*) I don't know what it's all about—but you take that back.

JIM. All right; I apologize.

WINSTON. You treat this young lady respectfully or you'll hear from me. (*To HELEN.*) Now, what is the trouble? I don't like to be treated like a yellow dog or a murderer, without being given some sort of reason for it.

JIM. Who said y'u wuz a yaller dog?

HENRY. Who said y'u was a murderer?

WINSTON. Nobody said it, but all of you act like it.

JIM. Wal, y'u see, Mr. Winston, it's this away. A leetle while ago —

HELEN. That will do, Mr. Dobbs. If there must be an explanation, I shall make it myself, at some more suitable time.

WINSTON. I am sure, Miss Glover, there can be no better time than right now. There is a fine view to be had at this time of day from the summit of Old Baldy. Won't you let me show it to you?

HELEN. That at least will reduce the number of undesirables from three to one. Come on.

(Goes up R.)

WINSTON. I can't say that I appreciate your reason for accompanying me, but it may give an opportunity for an explanation. *(Bows.)* After you, Miss Glover.

(Exeunt WINSTON and HELEN, R.)

JIM *(taking chair R. of checker board)*. All o' which, I 'low, means that 'fore long they'll be billin' an' cooin' like as if nothin' had happened.

HENRY. I hope so. An' I shore hope Miss Helen gits over that huffy feelin' o' hers afore she says some-thin' to Jerushy.

JIM. Great Jehoshaphat, Henry, Jerushy ain't got nothin' to say 'bout this.

HENRY. In one way, mebbe she ain't. But a little thing like not havin' no right ain't never bothered Jerushy yit.

JERUSHA *(heard off R.)*. Hen-ree! Hen-ree!

HENRY *(startled)*. Gosh, I hope she didn't hear me. *(Louder.)* I'm comin', Jerushy.

(Exit, R. Enter FUDGETOP, R., and comes down C.)

FUDGETOP. I'm looking for Miss Glover.

JIM. She left here ten minutes ago, with you an' her maw. Looks like y'd orter know where she is.

FUDGETOP. She left me, don't you know. Haven't you seen her since she left here with me?

JIM. I reckon.

FUDGETOP. Indeed! Where is she now?

JIM. Oh, her an' Winston went a-walkin' 'bout a minute afore y'u come in.

FUDGETOP (*coming down L.*). Winston! What does she see in that fellow?

JIM. Perhaps she likes his spunk.

FUDGETOP. Spunk—a very vulgar word, but I think I understand you. (*Edges nearer to JIM.*) She's always looking for romance.

JIM. Somethin' like that, I reckon.

FUDGETOP (*going nearer*). She loves heroes.

JIM. That's it. They all do, at her age.

FUDGETOP. Well, why couldn't I be one?

JIM (*rising and looking at FUDGETOP with new interest*). What, you?

FUDGETOP (*looking around to make sure they are alone*). Yes. Wouldn't it make a hit with her?

JIM (*amused*). It might. What's on your mind?

FUDGETOP. Anything might happen in this wild country. Couldn't—couldn't we fix up something that would—ah—bring me favorably to her notice?

JIM. Say, that's an idea. But s'posin' y'u tried t' be a hero an' fell down on th' job? Wouldn't thet be worse'n not tryin' 'tall?

FUDGETOP. Once I make up my mind, old chap, there will be no failure. I shall be a hero, all right.

JIM (*thoughtfully*). Mebbe I kin help y'u out a bit. Air y'u willin' to go th' limit?

FUDGETOP. I am willing to go to any length, my dear fellow, to win such a charming creature as Miss Glover.

JIM (*after glancing all about and going to the door*). Then set down here an' I'll put y'u next to somethin'.

FUDGETOP (*taking seat L. of barrel and JIM taking seat R. of stand*). I'm right with you, old chap.

JIM. Y'u remember me a-tellin' 'bout a moon-shiner an' murderer over on Goose Crick, that wuz a shore 'nough bad man?

FUDGETOP (*somewhat fearfully*). Ye-es, I believe I do.

JIM. Air y'u willin' to take a chanct on landin' him behind th' bars?

FUDGETOP. But I might be in danger, don't you know.

JIM. Not if y'u work it right, an' y'u wanted to be a real hero. Air y'u willin' to take a chanct?

FUDGETOP. Bah Jove, I'll do it.

JIM. Thet there's th' way to talk. I'm plumb proud o' y'u.

FUDGETOP. And you are sure there won't be any real danger?

JIM. Not if y'u work it right.

FUDGETOP. What must I do?

JIM. Wal, th' fust thing is to tell y'u who this here desyrado is.

FUDGETOP. Yes.

JIM. Winston.

FUDGETOP (*delighted*). Winston! Really?

JIM. Shore. Ain't I th' one thet knows? Now here, listen to me, an' I'll tell y'u what to do. Hev y'u got a gun?

FUDGETOP. I have a beautiful little revolver with a pearl handle.

JIM. Wall, don't put no confidence in th' pearl han'le. Y'u don't shoot with that. Now listen. Winston'll most likely be loafin' in here arter while. If he's with Miss Helen—so much th' better. Draw yer gun on him, an' then git Henry er somebody to tellyphone th' sheriff. Thet's all. Ain't it easy?

FUDGETOP. But suppose he resists. I don't want to kill him, don't you know.

JIM. Git th' drop on him, dern y'u. Then he ain't got no chanct. If y'u let him git wise afore y'u draw yer gun, y're a dead one. P'int yer gun at him afore he knows what's a-comin'. Then jus' make him set down, with his hands out to his sides, till th' sheriff comes. He won't be a fool, an' let y'u shoot him.

FUDGETOP. Why does Mr. Simpkins allow such a man to loaf about his home? Is he afraid of him?

JIM. Henry Simpkins don't know who this here feller is. He's been a-tellin' Henry he come from some city, an' Henry don't know no better. He'll be glad to help git him behind th' bars when he finds out who he is.

FUDGETOP. Perhaps I shall need some assistance. Will you assist me?

JIM. Not much. Y'u don't reckon I want his folks a-shootin' holes through me, do y'u?

FUDGETOP. Will they do that to me?

JIM. You'll be gone afore they git t'gether. But I got to stay here with my folks. An' don't y'u let on fer a minute that I tol' y'u. (*Rises.*)

FUDGETOP (*rising*). You may rest assured that I shall not say a word as to who informed me. But I should like to have some one to assist, if necessary.

(*Enter BUB, R.*)

BUB. Hev ary one o' y'u saw Tildy?

JIM (*to FUDGETOP*). There's th' feller to help y'u. He's been achin' fer a chanct at Winston. (*To BUB.*) Nope, we ain't saw her. Say, Bub, this here Winston ain't no partickler friend o' yourn, is he?

BUB (*coming down c.*). Not much he ain't. I got a feud with him.

JIM. How'd y'u like a chanct to git him? How'd y'u like to show him up afore Tildy an' all these here folks?

BUB. Golly! That there'd shore please me. How kin I do it?

JIM. Th' sheriff's a-lookin' fer him. He's a dangerous man.

BUB. Golly! Mebbe I better let him alone.

JIM. Yas, I reckon so. If y'u ain't got no nerve, they ain't no use a-tacklin' him.

BUB. Looky here, I ain't no coward.

JIM. All right then. Come here. (*JIM pushes BUB down on box R. of barrel.*) Y'u kin be a real shore 'nough hero, like Mr. Fudgepot's a-goin' to be.

BUB. How?

JIM (*standing behind barrel*). I 'low Mr. Fudgepot'll tell y'u. I got to be a-goin'. Y'u all reckolect now, that I ain't to be mentioned in this here affair. Luck to y'u.

FUDGETOP. We'll get him, all right, and a thousand thanks to you, old chap.

(Exit JIM, R.)

BUB. We'll git who?

FUDGETOP. This smart Mr. Winston. He's the man we are after.

BUB. How'll we git him?

FUDGETOP. Listen, and I shall explain. (*Sits L. of barrel.*) Come closer. (*BUB leans forward and FUDGETOP resumes, after nervous glances around.*) This Winston is a bad man, and the sheriff is after him. You and I are going to capture him and turn him over to the sheriff. Then we'll both be heroes.

BUB. Mebbe he'll shoot us, an' I ain't a-goin' to be no corpse hero, not if I kin help it, I ain't.

FUDGETOP. Nonsense! All we have to do is to get the drop on him.

BUB. What's that?

FUDGETOP. That means we must point our revolvers at him before he knows we are after him.

BUB. I ain't got no revolver to p'int.

FUDGETOP. You'll have to get a gun.

BUB. Mebbe I kin swipe Henry's ol' shotgun.

FUDGETOP. That will be all right. Are you with me?

BUB. Shore. Don't I look like I'm here?

FUDGETOP. Oh, deuce take it, I mean are you going to help?

BUB. I reckon—unless he begins t' shoot.

FUDGETOP. Then listen. I'll tell you what to do. As soon as I find this man in here, and not expecting anything, I shall enter the door, draw my revolver, and command him to surrender. If he doesn't surrender, I shall shoot him, although I don't want to shoot even a criminal. I believe it will be better if you don't appear at first. That will be more heroic, and more dramatic. You wait at the door, while I come in. Then if I need assistance, you can be at hand. Do you understand?

BUB. Shore. I'm a-goin' to stand thar at th' door, an' y're a-comin' in arter Winston. If he gits funny,

I'm a-goin' to come in, p'int th' gun at him, an' tell him to "hands up."

FUDGETOP. That's it exactly. You'll make a very able lieutenant.

WINSTON (*outside R.*). Really, Miss Helen, I don't think I am quite as much of a black sheep as you make me out.

BUB (*trembling*). Golly! Thar he is now.

FUDGETOP (*trembling*). And I haven't my revolver with me, don't you know. But we must not let him suspect.

BUB. I'm a-goin' arter thet shotgun right now.

(BUB bolts out door R., almost running over WINSTON and HELEN, who enter, R.)

WINSTON (*looking after BUB*). Holy mackerel, if Jerusha sees that boy in such a hurry, she'll have a fit. Why, here's Mr. Fudgetop. Can it be possible, Mr. Fudgetop, that you have been able to get Bub started at anything in such a hurry?

FUDGETOP. I think I can claim the credit, don't you know. But I must be going. (*Crosses R. to door.*)

HELEN. You needn't leave just because Mr. Winston and I have come.

FUDGETOP (*at door*). You will soon be sorry you have been so cold to me.

(*Exit, R.*)

HELEN. Heavens! What can he mean?

WINSTON (*laughing*). Perhaps he's going to commit suicide.

HELEN. Surely he doesn't think I'd be sorry at such a riddance as that. (*They come down C.*)

WINSTON. Now that he is gone, let me explain once more. Shall we sit down a while?

(HELEN takes seat R. and WINSTON seat L. of barrel.)

HELEN. There is nothing to explain. No one who would permit his affections to rest upon such a creature as Tildy could even interest me.

WINSTON. But I tell you I have never allowed my affections to rest upon Tildy.

HELEN. Then it is all the worse. How could you abuse the poor girl's confidence?

WINSTON. You don't understand. Among the girls around here it's just an ordinary courtesy. Any passably good-looking girl expects it. I had already forgotten it—and so will she.

HELEN. Yes, that is the way with men, to kiss and forget. You place a high value on a woman's kiss.

(*Enter TILDY, R.*)

TILDY. Laws-a-me, Mr. Winston, I bin a-lookin' fer y'u.

(*Advances to back of barrel. HELEN and WINSTON rise.*)

WINSTON. Darn the luck.

TILDY. I bin a-lookin' fer y'u, Mr. Winston.

HELEN. There now, Mr. Winston, aren't you glad to think that she has been looking for you?

WINSTON. Glad nothing.

HELEN. What! (*Goes R.*)

TILDY. Mercy on us, Mr. Winston, air y'u mad?

WINSTON. Go away, Tildy, I'm busy now.

TILDY. Then I 'low I better be a-goin'; but I'll be back arter while.

WINSTON (*down L.*). You needn't hurry.

(*Exit TILDY, R.*)

HELEN (*down R.*). And if I believed you now, perhaps in a week you would be sending me away, just as you are sending poor Tildy away now.

WINSTON (*advancing to her*). Look here, Helen, you are not treating me fairly, and you know it. I'll admit I kissed Tildy. But it didn't mean that I cared for her, and it doesn't mean that my regard for some other woman is meaningless. Hang it all, I'm not

asking for anything except a chance to prove that I do care for you. Won't you give me the opportunity?

MRS. GLOVER (*outside R.*). Never mind, Mr. Simpkins. She's probably in the store.

HELEN. There's mother coming. Perhaps you'd better ask her.

(WINSTON *makes a gesture of vexation, and crosses L.*)

(*Enter MRS. GLOVER, R.*)

MRS. GLOVER. I have been looking for you, daughter. I have something to say to you.

(*Comes down to R. of HELEN.*)

HELEN (*slightly vexed*). Well, you were with me all afternoon. Why didn't you tell me?

WINSTON (*aside*). Good-night!

MRS. GLOVER. I didn't think it best to tell you then, and —— (*To WINSTON.*) I am quite thirsty, Mr. Winston. Would you mind bringing me a glass of water?

WINSTON. With pleasure.

(*He starts toward bucket up L.*)

MRS. GLOVER. Oh, I trust you won't mind drawing a bucket of fresh water, Mr. Winston.

WINSTON (*taking bucket*). No indeed.

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. GLOVER. Now, daughter, a word with you while that odious creature is gone.

HELEN. He is not an odious creature.

MRS. GLOVER. Indeed! I can't see a single thing about him to attract one.

HELEN. He has a strong face.

MRS. GLOVER. Tush! What does a man's face amount to? I want you to give Mr. Fudgetop a definite answer without delay, and I want that answer to be yes.

HELEN. It won't be yes, but I'll make it definite enough. What is there to him? Nothing.

MRS. GLOVER. Indeed! He is quite good looking.

HELEN. Tush! What does a man's face amount to?

MRS. GLOVER. Such nonsense.

HELEN. I was only quoting your own answer to that very question.

FUDGETOP (*rushing in R., glances about, sees MRS. GLOVER and HELEN, and dashes down R. between them*). I must see you two alone at once. Where's Winston?

MRS. GLOVER. I got rid of him by sending him for a bucket of water. What is the matter?

FUDGETOP. That fellow is a desperado.

HELEN. Who?

FUDGETOP. Winston.

HELEN. Absurd! I don't believe it.

MRS. GLOVER. I knew it all the time. (*To HELEN.*) Hush, daughter, you don't know what you are talking about. Let Mr. Fudgetop finish. (*To FUDGETOP.*) Go ahead, Mr. Fudgetop.

FUDGETOP. I just found out a little while ago that he is a criminal who ought to be in the penitentiary. I am going to arrest him and put him behind the bars. I wanted to warn you so there would be no embarrassment when I arrest him.

MRS. GLOVER. And you are going to arrest that dangerous man? You are a real hero. But you must not let him hurt you.

FUDGETOP. Oh, I shan't.

HELEN. I don't believe for one minute that Mr. Winston is a criminal.

FUDGETOP. Well, he is, all right. And will you marry me when I prove myself a real hero?

HELEN. I'll consider it.

MRS. GLOVER. That's a dear.

FUDGETOP. Isn't she a darling? And she'll soon be my wife.

HELEN. I don't think there's much danger of it.

WINSTON (*outside R.*). Better look out, Bub. That gun'll go off and scatter your head all over Henry's farm.

FUDGETOP. 'There he comes now. I'll hide behind the counter and surprise him.

HELEN. Yes, hide. Real heroes always hide.

FUDGETOP. Don't let him know I'm here.

(Dashes behind counter, L.)

(Enter WINSTON, R.)

WINSTON. I'm sorry I kept you waiting so long, Mrs. Glover, but I waited long enough to draw a bucket for Jerusha.

MRS. GLOVER *(as WINSTON sets bucket down, up L., and starts toward her with glass)*. You have returned in good time. *(She takes glass.)*

FUDGETOP *(rising from behind counter and pointing revolver at WINSTON)*. Throw up your hands.

WINSTON *(pausing up C.)*. What in thunder? What is this, anyway—a motion picture drama?

FUDGETOP. Put up your hands, or you'll think it's a funeral. Don't trifle with me.

WINSTON *(holding up his hands)*. I don't particularly like the joke, whatever it is. Would you mind explaining?

FUDGETOP. As if you needed an explanation—a criminal of your stamp!

WINSTON. Criminal?

(Takes step toward FUDGETOP.)

FUDGETOP. Stop! *(WINSTON stops.)*

WINSTON. Well, I hardly know what to do. I ought to take that gun away from you and spank you, but that would hardly be fair play. I guess I'll just go outside and cool off a bit.

(Drops hands and starts toward door R.)

FUDGETOP. Don't go. I'll shoot.

WINSTON *(over his shoulder)*. Cut loose.

(Enter BUB, R.)

BUB *(leveling shotgun at WINSTON)*. No y'u don't! Halt! Hands up! *(WINSTON raises hands.)*

(MRS. GLOVER and HELEN cross to L.)

WINSTON. Well, I'll be jiggered!

(Enter JERUSHA, R., and advances to R. of BUB.)

JERUSHA. Bub Perkins, where air y'u goin' with that gun? (*Halts in amazement.*) What on airth is a-goin' on here?

FUDGETOP. I have just found out, Mrs. Simpkins, that this man (*pointing to WINSTON*) is a desperado. I felt it my duty to arrest him.

WINSTON. Desperado! Why, I'm no more of a desperado than you are, you blithering idiot.

JERUSHA. I bet he is. I knowed it all 'long. All his talk 'bout bein' a artist was put on. Th' idee o' him a-bein' a artist an' a-paintin' picters! No wonder he was a-kissin' Tildy.

HELEN. An artist? How romantic! Oh, Mr. Winston, why didn't you tell me you were an artist?

WINSTON (*up c.*). I had intended to tell you to-day.

HELEN. Well, I don't believe you are a desperado.

WINSTON. Thank you. I'm glad somebody around here has a little sense. (*Turning to FUDGETOP.*) I don't know who is responsible for this, but somebody will sweat when this is straightened out.

MRS. GLOVER (*down L.*). My, how boldly he talks!

(Enter TILDY, R. *Pauscs.*)

TILDY. Laws-a-me, Mr. Winston, what air they a-doin' to y'u? (*Goes to R. of WINSTON.*)

JERUSHA. Shut up yer snivelin', Tildy. That there man's a despyrado.

TILDY. He ain't, neither. That there dressed up gal is th' cause o' all this. (*Points to HELEN.*)

(Enter HENRY, R.)

HENRY. What in tarnation thunder is a-goin' on here?

FUDGETOP. Mr. Simpkins, you are the very man we want. Please call the sheriff and tell him to come

at once. I have captured the desperado he has been wanting for months.

HENRY. I'm a-goin' right now. (*Dashes out R.*)

WINSTON

TILDY

BUB

JERUSHA

FUDGETOP

MRS. GLOVER

HELEN

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—Same as ACT II.

(*Curtain discloses WINSTON lying on blanket in front of counter down L. and FUDGETOP, sitting, yawning, in chair down C., facing WINSTON. Another chair up C. Barrel and boxes removed.*)

FUDGETOP. Bah Jove, I wish that deuced sheriff would get here. I don't fancy sitting up all night to guard a desperado. It's quite a strain for one unused to such low work, don't you know.

WINSTON. No doubt it is quite a strain. Why don't you go to bed? I told you I would be here when the sheriff came.

FUDGETOP. Fancy taking the word of a desperado. It would be quite romantic, wouldn't it? But I am too wise a bird to be caught so easily.

WINSTON. You may think you're a bird now, but before long you'll know you are a sucker.

FUDGETOP. I'm getting thirsty, fellow. Step over there to the bucket (*pointing with revolver to water bucket on counter up L.*) and bring me a drink.

WINSTON (*rising*). I ought to spank you for that insult, but I'll wait until this affair is over and I can have a real laugh at your expense.

(*Goes to bucket and returns with drink for FUDGETOP.*)

FUDGETOP (*after taking drink*). I feel better now. That bally sheriff surely will be here in a few minutes. It's about daylight.

(*Starts to hand WINSTON dipper and WINSTON grabs revolver instead. FUDGETOP rises.*)

WINSTON. This is quite a pretty little plaything. Is it loaded?

FUDGETOP. Y-es. Be careful how you handle it.

WINSTON. What will you give me not to shoot you?

FUDGETOP. Bah Jove, old chap, you surely wouldn't shoot me. Think how nicely I have treated you as a prisoner.

WINSTON. Yes. I don't know when I have slept as soundly as I did on that soft floor.

FUDGETOP. But I might have tied you, don't you know.

WINSTON. So you might. Well, just for that, I'll return this gun. But be careful how you handle it.

(Returns revolver, takes dipper from FUDGETOP, puts it on counter, goes to blanket and sits down with back against counter. Humming tune, takes out pipe, fills it, and lights it. FUDGETOP sits and nods drowsily.)

MRS. GLOVER *(outside R., pounding on door)*. May I come in, Mr. Fudgetop?

FUDGETOP *(starting from his sleep and pointing revolver at WINSTON)*. Halt. Don't you try to get away.

WINSTON *(laughing)*. Great Cæsar, man, you don't think I am going to vanish in smoke, do you?

MRS. GLOVER *(outside R.)*. Let me in, Mr. Fudgetop.

FUDGETOP *(rising and unlocking door)*. Certainly, Mrs. Glover.

(Enter MRS. GLOVER, R. She comes down c. with FUDGETOP.)

MRS. GLOVER. I didn't know whether I should be welcome. I am not familiar with procedure in prisons. Why, Mr. Fudgetop, how weary you look. Really, the strain must have been terrible.

FUDGETOP *(placing chair between his chair and WINSTON. MRS. GLOVER sits)*. Indeed, the strain has been rather severe, but I kept in mind the fact that I was doing the community a great service.

WINSTON. Call it a service if you like, but it sounded more like snoring to me.

MRS. GLOVER. Oh, Mr. Fudgetop, can't you make the fellow remain silent? I can't endure hearing the despicable creature speak.

FUDGETOP. Certainly, Mrs. Glover. (*To WINSTON.*) Fellow, silence!

MRS. GLOVER. How really commanding you are! I do wish Helen could appreciate you as I do. But the dear child is so young.

FUDGETOP. What does—does Miss Helen think of me now?

MRS. GLOVER (*sorrowfully*). She laughs whenever I mention you. (*WINSTON grins.*)

FUDGETOP. Laughs! Dear me! She'll feel different when this is over.

MRS. GLOVER. I'm sure she will. (*Rises.*) I must be going, Mr. Fudgetop. I merely dropped in to assure myself that you were all right. Don't feel too provoked at my daughter. Remember she is so young.

FUDGETOP. I shall have patience, my dear Mrs. Glover.

(*Exit MRS. GLOVER, R. She is no more than out the door when FUDGETOP falls asleep and begins to snore. Enter TILDY, R.*)

TILDY. Laws-a-me, Mr. Winston, how uncomfortabl' y'u look! (*Comes down L. to WINSTON.*)

WINSTON. Uncomfortable! Why, Tildy, I never felt better in my life.

TILDY (*pointing to FUDGETOP*). He won't hurt me fer a-comin' in, will he?

WINSTON. Certainly not. Don't wake him up. He wouldn't hurt anybody for anything.

TILDY (*bashfully*). Say, Mr. Winston, I ain't never b'lieved a word 'bout y'u bein' a feller what th' sheriff wanted. I'd like powerful well to he'p y'u. Ain't they somethin' I kin do to git y'u loose?

WINSTON. Why, Tildy! You say you don't believe I'm guilty, but you want me to run away.

TILDY. Them others don't b'lieve in y'u like I do.

WINSTON. Mighty kind of you, Tildy; but you'd better run along now and help Jerusha with the breakfast. You mustn't think of me any more.

TILDY (*beginning to cry*). So y're a-sendin' me away.

WINSTON. Tildy, will you do something for me?

TILDY (*delighted*). Oh, Mr. Winston!

WINSTON. Thank you. Run down to my cabin and bring me the portfolio that's lying on the couch.

TILDY. All right, Mr. Winston. I'll go right away. (*Runs out R.*)

FUDGETOP (*suddenly waking and pointing revolver at WINSTON*). Halt. Don't attempt to escape.

WINSTON. That's the second time you've got excited and pointed that gun at me. Don't handle the blooming thing so carelessly. It's apt to go off.

(*Enter BUB, R.*)

BUB. Haw, haw, haw! I got y'u now. I knowed I'd git even with y'u.

(*Comes down to R. of FUDGETOP.*)

FUDGETOP. You got him? What do you mean, boy, by talking like that? I was the one who got him.

BUB. I reckon I stopped him when he wuz a-gittin' away, didn' I?

WINSTON. Great Christopher, gentlemen, don't fight now over the honor of getting me. Maybe you'll both want to dodge it after while. Now, what does this whole business mean?

FUDGETOP. You will know all in due time.

BUB. Yep. I 'low th' judge'll tell y'u. Haw, haw, haw!

WINSTON. Well, I hope he knows more than you two.

(*Enter HELEN, R.*)

HELEN. Ah, good-morning, Mr. Fudgetop. (*FUDGETOP and WINSTON rise.*) How glad I am to see you are safe. (*She comes down L. C.*)

(FUDGETOP and WINSTON are surprised, the former agreeably, the latter disagreeably.)

FUDGETOP. Thanks, awfully, Miss Helen. You really—ah—surprise me. Indeed, you do.

HELEN (*mysteriously motioning to WINSTON as FUDGETOP looks important*). You must be quite tired with your all night vigil, Mr. Fudgetop.

FUDGETOP. I am deuced tired, don't you know. It is quite a strain to keep one's eye all night long on a desperate criminal.

HELEN. I should think so. Is there anything I can do?

FUDGETOP. Nothing, thank you, Miss Helen.

HELEN. A little fresh air would help you wonderfully. Perhaps—perhaps I could remain on guard for you while you step outside and get a breath of fresh air. The air really is quite bracing this morning.

FUDGETOP. How kind of you! But what if my—our prisoner should attempt to escape?

HELEN. You could leave your revolver with me. You know I'm used to a revolver.

BUB. I bet I wouldn't trust her, ner no other gal.

FUDGETOP. Sir, how dare you criticize Miss Glover? You may go at once.

BUB. All right, I'll go, but I 'low y'u better take my advice.

(Exit BUB, R.)

FUDGETOP. Just to show that country bumpkin what a chump he is, I'll accept your suggestion. Here is my revolver. (*Hands HELEN revolver.*) I won't be gone but a minute.

(Exit, R.)

HELEN (*advancing to WINSTON and offering him revolver*). We haven't a minute to spare. Here, take this gun. Please go at once.

WINSTON. What? Why, just now you were praising Mr. Fudgetop for his wonderful valor, and now you are offering me a chance to escape. I can hardly understand.

HELEN. Oh, you stupid. I don't believe his story for a minute. Why don't you go?

WINSTON. Miss Glover—Helen. (*Goes close to her.*) So you trust me, in spite of everything?

HELEN. Yes.

WINSTON (*taking her hand*). Why, this is wonderful. You don't even know who I am.

HELEN. I know you couldn't do anything wrong. I would trust you with anything I have.

WINSTON. With your heart, my dear?

HELEN. Yes. (WINSTON *tries to embrace her, but she holds him away.*) But how foolish you are. Every moment is precious.

WINSTON. Every moment with you, yes.

HELEN. You know I didn't mean that. You must escape. Go! Go!

WINSTON. But what would they think of you?

HELEN. Don't think of me. Go; please go.

WINSTON. Helen, you're a darling—but I can't do it for two reasons. The first is that I mustn't compromise you, and the second is that I'm no more a desperado than you are.

HELEN. But Mr. Fudgetop thinks he has information. He is sure to make trouble for you.

WINSTON. He's sadly mistaken, and he's going to look very foolish before this is over.

HELEN (*disappointed*). Then you won't go?

WINSTON. No, dear girl. It would spoil a good joke.

(*Enter FUDGETOP, R., hurriedly.*)

FUDGETOP. I was afraid he had killed you. (*Comes down R. of HELEN, who hands him revolver.*) Deuce take it, Miss Helen, I suffered the most excruciating anguish when I realized that I had left you all alone with a desperado.

HELEN. Oh, is he a desperado?

FUDGETOP. Desperado! Oh, I see. Good joke, ha, ha, ha! Making light of your own heroism. Miss Helen, you are a dear.

HELEN. Never mind what I am. You'll have

enough in a little while trying to figure out what you have been.

FIDGETOP. Bah Jove, I don't get you.

WINSTON. No, and you are not likely to get her, either.

(Sound of auto horn is heard off R.)

HELEN. I hear a machine. Perhaps it's the sheriff.

WINSTON. I hope it is.

FIDGETOP. Why?

WINSTON. Because I'd rather be alone in a cell than free in a room with you.

(BUB, followed by SHERIFF, HENRY and JERUSHA, enters, R.)

BUB *(pointing to WINSTON)*. Thar he is, shuriff. That's him.

(SHERIFF advances down C., with BUB, JERUSHA and HENRY. JERUSHA and HENRY down R. BUB and SHERIFF R. C. FIDGETOP C. HELEN L. C. WINSTON L., leaning against the counter.)

SHERIFF. All right. What's th' charge agin him?

FIDGETOP *(surprised)*. Wh-at? Why?

SHERIFF. Wh-at? Why? 'Cause they's got to be a charge agin a man afore he kin be arrested. What's th' charge agin him?

FIDGETOP. Why, he's a moonshiner and a thief and an embezzler and a murderer and ——

SHERIFF. Oh, is that all? Anything else?

FIDGETOP *(surprised)*. No, nothing else that I can think of now.

SHERIFF. Whar'd he do all this here crooked work?

FIDGETOP. Over on Goose Creek.

SHERIFF. When'd it all happen? I been shuriff here four years, an' lived in th' county all m' life, an' I ain't never heerd o' nothin' like that over on Goose Crick. *(Crosses to L. of WINSTON.)*

HENRY. I never heerd o' nothin' like that, neither. They's somethin' wrong. An' I never did think Mr. Winston was no murderer.

JERUSHA. Lots you know 'bout it, I reckon, Henry Simpkins. Th' feller thet sold y'u that gold brick weren't no swindler, neither, was he? Th' feller y'u bought them lightnin' rods of weren't no rascal neither, was he? Mr. Fudgetop says that Mr. Winston is all them things, an' he ort to know. Jus' keep yer mouth shut.

HENRY. All right, Jerushy, all right. I reckon y'u know best.

(Enter MRS. GLOVER, R.)

MRS. GLOVER. Dear me! Isn't that dreadful man taken away yet? (Comes R. C. to FUDGETOP.)

HELEN (to her mother). No, he isn't, and he won't be if I can help it, either. (To SHERIFF.) Mr. Sheriff, that man is no criminal, and you have nothing against him. There must be some mistake. Why not release him?

SHERIFF. Thunderation! I'm all balled up. This here feller (*pointing to FUDGETOP*) says this here feller (*pointing to WINSTON*) was powerful mean over on Goose Crick. I don' know nothin' 'bout no meanness over thar, an' Henry here don't neither. But I ain't a-goin' to ack too rash like. (Turns to FUDGETOP.) Whar'd y'u git yer dope 'bout this here feller bein' a murderer an' all them things?

FUDGETOP. I gave a sacred promise not to reveal the gentleman's identity.

SHERIFF (*blankly*). Y'u done what?

FUDGETOP. I promised not to tell who told me.

SHERIFF. Wal, thet bein' th' case, I promise not to take this here feller to jail. (To WINSTON.) Mister, y'u kin go whenever y'u git ready.

FUDGETOP. Hold on. I'll tell.

SHERIFF (to WINSTON). Wait a minute. Mebbe I'll want y'u. (To FUDGETOP.) All right, cut loose.

FUDGETOP. My informant was Mr. James Dobbs.

HENRY. Well, I'll be —

SHERIFF. What! Lyin' Jim Dobbs? What d' y'u think o' thet, Henry? Th' idee o' holdin' a feller here all night jus' 'cause Jim Dobbs spun one o' his

yarns. (*To WINSTON.*) Now I know fer sure, mister, y'u kin go.

(*Enter JIM, R. Comes down c.*)

JIM. Howdy, folks. What's all this here excitement 'bout?

SHERIFF. Oh, nothin' much. Jus' one more o' yer funny lies, Jim.

JIM. Tarnation, shuriff, what air y'u talkin' 'bout?

SHERIFF. Didn' y'u tell this here feller (*pointing to FUDGETOP*) that this here feller (*pointing to WINSTON*) wuz a murderer an' a lot more things worse'n thet? An' warn't all y'u told a lie from beginnin' to endin'?

JIM. Shore. I wuz jus' jokin'. This here feller (*pointing to FUDGETOP*) wuz a-lookin' fer excitement, an' I jus' spun a yarn fer him.

SHERIFF (*to FUDGETOP*). There y'u are. Mr. Winston is no more a robber and murderer than you are.

FUDGETOP. How do you know his name's Winston? He has been posing here as an artist, and he told me he's a business man. I demand that he be held on suspicion.

HELEN. Of course he's an artist.

MRS. GLOVER. I was led to believe he is a banker.

(*Enter TILDY, R. She runs down L. to WINSTON, and hands him portfolio.*)

WINSTON. Thank you, Tildy. You're just in time. (*He crosses R. to MRS. GLOVER and hands her portfolio.*) Mrs. Glover, I owe you an apology. I told Mrs. Simpkins not to say I was an artist, as I did not wish my work interrupted. Look through this portfolio. You'll find my sketches there, and some letters.

(*MRS. GLOVER opens portfolio.*)

TILDY (*crossing R.*). There's a fine picter of me there.

BUB. Then I'll bet it's a pretty picter.

TILDY (*pleased*). Why, Bub, do you think I'm pretty?

(BUB and TILDY talk together, evidently on good terms.)

MRS. GLOVER (*holding up letter*). Why, here's a letter from my brother Will. (*To WINSTON.*) Do you know him?

WINSTON. What—Billy McBride? I should say so. He has the studio next to mine in Chicago.

MRS. GLOVER. Oh, are you Hal Winston? I've seen your pictures often. What a dreadful mistake. Please forgive me.

(*Goes L. to WINSTON and offers hand.*)

WINSTON (*taking her hand*). My dear Mrs. Glover, there is nothing to forgive. (*Smiles.*) You have provided the best joke I ever knew.

FUDGETOP. Yes, bah Jove. And it's all on me.

WINSTON. Old man, you shall be best man at our wedding.

ALL. Wedding!

WINSTON. Yes. (*Takes HELEN's hand.*) This little girl stood by me in trouble, and (*to MRS. GLOVER*) I'd like to stand by her all my life.

BUB. I want'er state the feud's all off.

(*Puts arm around TILDY.*)

MRS. GLOVER (*smiling*). Oh, dear! So you are going to take my little girl from me. Then you are a desperate robber, after all.

WINSTON. Yes—an innocent desperado.

JIM	FUDGETOP	HELEN
TILDY		WINSTON
BUB		MRS. GLOVER
HENRY		SHERIFF
JERUSHA		

CURTAIN

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